
BRIDGING THE GAP: PILOT PROJECT PHASE II

FORMATIVE EVALUATION

AN INITIATIVE OF:

The Random North Development Association

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EVALUATION COMPLETED BY:



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Executive Summary

Bridging the Gap Pilot Project (Phase II) is a client-centred approach to education and employment that integrates the realities of employers in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. Phase II of the Pilot involved 4 economic zones, 5 communities, 5 private sector businesses and 50+ social and economic development agencies throughout Newfoundland and Labrador over a 12 month period. All to provide long term, sustainable employment and life altering educational and developmental opportunities to 44 unemployed people who had not completed high school.

Was the project successful in meeting its goals? At the writing of this project:

- at least 38 out of the 44 clients have gained employment. 30 of them on a full time basis with the employment sponsor (a further 6 month window is given before calculating final employment statistics);
- all 44 clients successfully completed the 40 week program;
- all 44 clients improved their essential workplace skills - many dramatically;
- all 44 clients improved their overall academic skills - many substantially - and some even completed their high school requirements;
- all 44 clients spoke highly of the program;
- all of the social, economic and educational partners would participate in the program again, and,
- Some of the partners considered it the most successfully designed program ever, in terms of meeting the realities of the seemingly intractable economic development challenges of rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

So yes, Bridging the Gap has been a success. It has taken a concept developed in one area and tested on one industrial sector and applied it in:

- 5 other areas throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, all with different demographics;
- 5 other industrial sectors;
- 5 different employment partners - one unionized; one a Co-operative, one an established national business and two brand new start-ups (one led by an experienced entrepreneur and one led by new entrepreneurs) and a partnership of two companies
- 4 different (and all new) Community Learning Networks
- with 4 new project co-ordinators,
- 3 new college campuses, HRDC and HRE offices

- and one aboriginal organization.

This evaluation report is a formative one - as such it was involved with the project throughout its entirety, and much of its value was in the ongoing observations, recommendations and advice provided throughout the 12 months.

This report will attempt to capture much of that evaluation. It does not aspire to present a comprehensive report on the activities, challenges and accomplishments of Bridging the Gap (Phase II) - there are large reports from each site as well as a report from the provincial co-ordinators which provides an excellent summary of that and they are commended to the reader.

What you will find in this evaluation are:

- an overview of the evaluation methodology;
- recommendations for improving the project from many different sources;
- highlights, challenges and accomplishments of each site;
- cost/benefit analyses from multiple perspectives, and
- the social and economic landscapes of all five sites to provide the reader with a context from which to understand the challenges these communities face.

Special thanks are offered here to the entire Bridging the Gap team - all the site project co-ordinators, Community Learning Networks, clients, College of the North Atlantic and the provincial co-ordination team. All gave freely of their time, expertise, experience and knowledge.

1.0 Background

The Background section is intended to provide the reader with the necessary information to understand the model of Bridging the Gap. There is further background material available on the Bridging the Gap web site, www.bridgingthegaps.com.

A note about terminology. As there were many government departments and agencies involved in Bridging the Gap there are many acronyms. A key to these acronyms is provided in the appendix as an aid to the reader.

Additionally, terms such as participants, clients and students are used interchangeably to refer to the clients in the program; terms such as curriculum, studies, academic program, training and skill set design are also used interchangeably to cover the body of knowledge imparted to the clients. This clarification is to recognize some government agencies use different terminologies, and it is challenging to find common ground, especially when working with and interviewing so many people for the duration of the formative evaluation

1.1 What is Bridging the Gap?

Bridging the Gap (BTG) is a model first developed by Michelle Brown at the Random North Development Association (RNDA). Michelle's work in the Community Economic Development and Literacy fields identified what to her was a glaring government programming gap. On the one hand, people who had not finished high school were taking training programs for which there seemed few employment opportunities in their home towns, and on the other hand, expanding companies were searching for employees with specific abilities and skill sets and were unable to find and keep them. These people didn't need to be college or university trained, rather they needed to be trained specifically for the requirements of that position.

Michelle spent considerable time researching and developing the concept with a team of like-minded individuals in the Clarendville Area. With the support of government partners she held many consultation sessions with local people in Economic Zone 15 (1992-1996).

During these discussions, a central theme was evident. People acknowledged the importance of education, but finding sustainable employment was their main priority. In order for people to have employment, education is a major component. Unfortunately, many rural residents do not have the essential skills to move into a new employment setting. This was a catch-22 situation from which people found themselves unable to escape.

Based on this, community-based organizations¹ in Zone 15 formed a Community Learning Network (CLN) to discuss what collaborative efforts could potentially link education with employment to try and address this catch-22. For the context of this initiative, a Community Learning Network (CLN) is a community-controlled and directed team whose aim is to further community development and enhance the lives of rural communities by supporting and encouraging social and economic growth.

In the early stages of the research for Bridging the Gap it was recognized by the group that a change in the way employment programs were designed was necessary.

¹The CLN in Zone 15 included representation from the public and private sectors, volunteer organizations, and educational providers in the zone.

The group felt that in the past as well as the present, many programs have been designed with fundamental gaps:

- They didn't incorporate the needs of the individuals who would be participating in them.
- There was as an approach based upon fitting people into programs vs. designing programs around community and individual needs.
- Finally, they felt that more time needed to be taken for planning social and economic development initiatives, instead of providing short-term band-aid solutions and new and more efficient ways of working together to develop and deliver programs as well as services that will achieve effective outcomes were all needed.

The subsequent model (Bridging the Gap) attempts to address these gaps, hence the name.

1.2 BTG Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives of the model of Bridging the Gap are:

- securing employment for individuals struggling with entering the local labour market;
- providing training for clients relevant to a workplace and can be directly applied;
- provide learning opportunities for clients which enhances their life skills and their employability;
- develop a tailored curriculum and policy and procedures manual for employers for training at their workplace
- make available a pool of well-trained and knowledgeable clients as potential employees that are close to being fully productive from their hiring;
- enhancing the business continued fiscal health by providing well-trained individuals with a good overall knowledge of the business and the industry;
- have a positive impact on the community by providing employment and income opportunities with disadvantaged residents;
- develop a community based team focusing on the linkages between employment and education, and
- enhance the client's family strength and well-being by providing income and close-to-home employment prospects for clients and removing the stigma of being on government assistance.

1.3 Phase I versus Phase II of the Pilot

The original CLN in Zone 15 included representation from the public and private sectors, volunteer organizations, and educational providers in the zone. Research data was compiled in 1997 by the Random North Development Association (RNDA) to determine if this link between education and

employment was possible.

After the research was completed, the Bridging the Gap Model was tested in 1998-99 with a resource-based company (Atlantic Marine Products Inc.) in Zone 15 who were expanding their current operations.

Participants were assessed and selected based on their limited academic skills (not having graduated high school) and employment status (unemployed/underemployed). The training component was designed in a flexible manner that met the needs of the selected participants and the workplace skill sets required by the company. Training was on site at the company and included a combination of academic and practical/technical training.

The initial pilot was successful in providing employment, increasing academic and workplace skills, and ensuring that the partnering company had a productive workforce. As of the spring of 2003, seven of the nine original participants are still working with Atlantic Marine Products, and the other two participants are working in another company (having left Atlantic Marine of their own choice).

In addition, the Community Learning Network has stayed in place. It has proved to be a springboard for other ideas and to launch the provincial pilot (Bridging the Gap, Phase II).

1.4 Sponsor

Random North Development Association is the provincial sponsor of Phase II of Bridging the Gap, as well as being the sponsor of two of the individual projects themselves.

The Association was incorporated on June 6th, 1980, and represents the geographic area of Random Island, Smith Sound (from Milton to Burgoynes Cove) and Clarendville/Shoal Harbour. There are 18 communities in the region covered by the association and although not all are member communities, Random North has maintained an active presence throughout the area. It is one of the few development associations remaining active in the province.

In addition to many employment and development initiatives in the area, Random North Development Association was instrumental in bringing literacy issues to the forefront in the region. RNDA sponsored a Literacy Outreach Office for two years to assist individuals with low academic skills find volunteer tutors. RNDA established a resource centre in it's building (in Shoal Harbour) where adults can borrow resource material, video and audio cassettes to assist them with their reading, writing, and math. As well, RNDA has developed a motivational video "Their Personal History" to help motivate people to return to school to complete their high school certificate. This video was sent across the province as well as the rest of Canada. It was very well received by the different groups and organizations.

The Random North Development Association tries to act as a guide and helper to surrounding communities and if need be, their voice in matters that concern them. The staff includes a full time Office Manager.

RNDA Mission Statement and Objectives

To improve the livelihood and well being of all persons living in rural Newfoundland and Labrador by developing the strengths of members and communities, and co-

operatively building, through regional organizations, a viable and independent social and economic base.

To accomplish this, the following objectives have been identified:

1. To improve the quality of life in Newfoundland and Labrador.
2. To establish a self-sufficient economic base.
3. To act as an agent for progressive change.
4. To maximize the benefit of resource development to local people.
5. To ensure that local people participate in making the decisions that affect them.
6. To provide a network of information, resources and services for local people.
7. To foster co-operation and communication among all communities and organizations.
8. To develop a long-term plan for the region. To ensure that short-term employment programs complement long-term development.
9. To promote the development of local leadership.
10. To keep the accomplishments and activities on the Associations constantly in the public eye.

1.5 Funding

Funding for the implementation of Bridging the Gap Pilot, Phase II was supplied by the following agencies:

- Human Resources Development Canada, Government of Canada (through the Labour Market Development Agreement)
- Human Resources & Employment, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
- Labrador Métis Nation

In-kind contribution of the costs of services, offices, travel, office supplies, communications and computer equipment, aptitude testing were provided by:

- College of the North Atlantic (particularly the Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Bay St. George, Baie Verte, Grand Falls, and Clarenville campuses and staff);
- Random North Development Association (The provincial sponsor)

- The regional sponsoring agencies: Southern Aurora Development Board, Baie Verte Development Association, Burgeo Diversification and Development Board; Random North Development Association and the Port au Port Community Learning Network
- The five employment partners: Newfoundland Hardwoods (Clareville); Lethbridge Agricultural Co-operative; Coastal Growers (Burgeo); S&N Sawmills and Strugnells Woodworks (both in Port Hope Simpson) and in Triton Ocean Products.

While not within the scope of this evaluation, there was additional funding for the provincial co-ordination and management of the project received from the Office of Learning Technologies, Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Comprehensive Economic Development Agreement, Human Resources Development Canada, Government of Canada.

1.6 Role of Evaluation

If the Bridging the Gap model is a valid approach to assist unemployed and under employed people gain and retain employment through integrating economic and social development, at least two things had to be tested after the initial successful pilot in Catalina.:

Can it work outside of Zone 15? This concept needed to be taken to dramatically different parts of Newfoundland and Labrador with differing economies, cultures, geographic challenges and support structures and tested there.

Can it work in different sectors with different types of employment partners? Phase I was with a company expanding their current operations in the sealing industry. In order to test whether this model can be replicated, it needs to be tried using different sectors and different types of employment partners.

The evaluation of Bridging the Gap, Pilot Phase II was to be a formative evaluation to measure the social and economic impacts on the affected individuals and if these interventions have positive/negative outcomes on the identified communities and four partnering economic zones.

The evaluation was intended to be an ongoing process and the four Community Learning Networks representing each zonal region played a major role in this pan provincial evaluation.

The involvement of the Community Learning Networks bring a unique multi-disciplinary and multi-sectorial perspective to the evaluation process gained from experience on the "front lines" of program facilitation. They provide an analysis which is well-grounded in the practicalities and realities of implementing an initiative such as Bridging the Gap.

Each Community Learning Network worked collectively to implement each link of the model, including the evaluation. The Community Learning Networks met monthly to discuss how the initiative was progressing and evaluation and follow-up issues were discussed at these meetings. This is considered an "organic" approach to evaluation in that, as observations are made and verified by the evaluator, changes are made to the operations based upon them.

2.0 Methodology of Evaluation

This section will outline the specific terms of reference for the evaluation. It is intended to set the parameters of the expectations of the findings of this report.

2.1 Areas of Research

Impact Areas

Individuals - What were the changes in skill levels (both academic and workplace skills)?; Did this process move people from transfer dependency to employment income in each of the five zones?; What other impact(s) did this concept have on the individual?

Community - Were the individuals more able to participate in/contribute to the development of their communities/zone?; Was the economic zone process (for example: Zonal Strategic Plans in each of the five partnering zones) supported?; Was out migration reduced?

Economy - Did the training participants receive sustainable employment with the partnering employment partners in each of the four zones?; Was there business development through productivity, or in other ways with each of the employment partners?

Integration Process

Partnership Support - Who were the key partners in each of the four zonal regions?; What did they contribute?; How did this partnership work?

Cost-Effectiveness - What were the resulting savings to both orders of government by moving people from transfer dependency to employment income?; How does the Bridging the Gap model concept compare with other types of non-integrated support programs?

Other Evaluation Questions

What are the pre and post levels of academic and specific workplace skill sets of the training participants? (Tools to be used include academic measurement tools from the College of the North Atlantic and the Test of Workplace Essential Skills (TOWES) to measure the changes in workplace basic and essential skills.) Note: The College of the North Atlantic will be working with the Evaluation Team to conduct the pre and post academic assessments, as well as, the aptitude and interest assessments on the training participants.

Has there been attitudinal shifts/changes in the self-confidence of the training participants? Conduct pre and post measurements of these changes on each of the training participants before and after the training intervention. It is also important to evaluate the social impacts this concept can have on individuals and communities.

What are the perceived benefits by participating in the Bridging the Gap model from the points of view of the training participants, employers, union if applicable, post-secondary training institutions, economic zone boards/rural development groups, and local government departments?

2.2 Methodology

Evaluation Tasks

The following Evaluation Tasks are taken directly from the Proposal to conduct the Evaluation and follow-up workplan.

Project Planning, Management & Communication

Meet with Evaluation Management Team (Initial Meeting).

This meeting will be held in the Clarenville area and will discuss the methodology and negotiate and discuss any changes.

Meet with Evaluation Management Team (4 mtgs over the 57 weeks).

Each quarterly meeting will review the progress to date and significant milestones in the upcoming quarter as well as a substantive discussion on any issues arising around the evaluation.

Monthly Written Reports.

The monthly written reports will be 1-2 pages long and provided electronically to the Evaluation Management Committee. These reports will review the progress, obstacles and accomplishments of the preceding month.

Plan the Evaluation Strategy

Develop Research Tools.

The research tools will include the Interview questions for the Key Informants, the list of questions for the opening and closing focus groups with the CLNs, and the interview questions for the participants.

Incorporate feedback. The feedback from the Evaluation Management Team will be incorporated and the research tools adapted to arrive at a final draft of the research tools. (See Appendix for example of "Evaluation Map")

Primary Research with Stakeholders and CLNs

In person meeting with Community Learning Networks (2 per CLN).

These focus group meetings will be held both in the summer of 2002 and the Spring of 2003, i.e. at the beginning and the end of the project. All will be held in person in the following locations

- Clarenville
- Port Hope Simpson
- Burgeo
- Baie Verte

Vide-Conference Meeting with Community Learning Networks (4 per CLN).

In addition to the In Person Focus Groups, Hollett and Sons Inc. will hold 4 meetings with each CLN via Video Conference (except with Zone 15 which will be in person).

- Clarendville (All will be in person)
- Port Hope Simpson
- Burgeo
- Baie Verte

Interview Stakeholders

Hollett and Sons Inc. will interview the key stakeholders, primarily from the provincial and federal levels of government (estimated at 12) close to the end of the project. These are individuals who have expertise in the area and are also from the funding agencies. The final list will be drawn up in conjunction with the Evaluation Management Team.

Primary Research with BTG Participants

Interviews with participants

There is a critical need to have primary research with the approximately 42 project participants. Hollett and Sons Inc. proposes to conduct 4 interviews per person. 2 of these will be conducted in person (in conjunction with existing travel to the region) and the other two will be via telephone or videoconference. These conversations/interviews will explore the impacts, progress, accomplishments and barriers being experienced by the participants. To best accommodate their varying literacy levels, these will not be text-based surveys, but interviews/conversations with Hollett and Sons Inc. doing all of the writing and recording.

Secondary Research

In addition to the Primary research, secondary research will be completed, using the Social and Economic Landscape provided by Random North as a guide. This secondary research will be done primarily through the "Community Accounts" data base, but will use other available databases as required.

Analysis & Writing

Analysis

The analysis of the data will be ongoing throughout the 57 weeks of the project, but the final piece will require several days of intensive analysis.

Writing

In addition to the analysis, there are several days required to write and polish the results and the conclusions of the Evaluation. Once the Draft is written, it will be presented to the Evaluation Management Committee for their review and feedback.

Editing based upon Feedback

The feedback will be discussed and incorporated as appropriate and agreed upon with the Evaluation Management Committee

The total level of Effort for the Evaluation of Bridging the Gap was 42 consulting days (approximately \$40,000).

2.3 Changes to the Planned Methodology

The methodology was adjusted several times based upon discussion and negotiation with the Evaluation Management Team as the project was carried out, the requirements of time on task to travel and the Social and Economic Landscapes in particular took longer than anticipated. In addition, there was a perception of "interview fatigue" amongst both the clients and the other participants in the program, so the meetings and interviews were cut down to a more manageable number.

In addition, it proved difficult to find stakeholders to interview who were knowledgeable about the operations of the project and had not been already interviewed as part of another group, such as the CLN. In the end it was decided to interview the respective Associate District Administrators of the College of the North Atlantic on their experiences with the project.

2.4 An Organic Evaluation

There were many examples where this formative evaluation was able to pass along suggestions for changes - based upon the interactive and organic approach developed with the client.:

July, 2002: "Over testing" Met with Suzanne Keeping (CNA Student Services Counsellor - Clarendville Campus) We discussed the tests that she administered as well as the testing process and came up with some recommendations for change, based upon her experience. Her primary concern was the degree of difficulty of the Aptitude and Interest tests (considering the literacy rate of many of the potential participants) more than the TABE one. I agreed to track Michelle down (she is travelling on site visits) and discuss it with her. This was one of the issues with the last evaluation. Michelle B. sat in on many teleconferences with the College and they were fully aware of the likely literacy levels of the client base, yet they still didn't recommend tools which were the best suited? Why? Raised with the client and this issue has been addressed.

August Burgeo Diversification and Development Board. Michelle is faced with either letting the BDDDB cut loose and run the program from a unilateral approach or "forcing" him to operate by the BTG model which includes a CLN and the marshalling of the community of resources that brings. But the question is whether that is a key point of the model, or whether it only works in some communities where there are strong CLN members who believe strongly in team direction and decision-making. Perhaps in communities where it isn't as strong as in Clarendville and where geography is such a strong barrier to getting together, a more unilateral approach might be a wise move. Not everyone is

as team oriented as is Michelle and her CLN.. There will be a difficult decision in being clear on what is her own personal beliefs and values on how to operate and what can work in the regions.

- August, 2002 Ethical Disagreement with an Academic Instructor Back and forth with Michelle regarding the Academic Instructor for the Hardwoods project. Apparently, he ethically disagrees with both writing and testing the participants on their workplace skills, as he feels it will skew the results. All other Academic instructors have agreed to it and are proceeding. Michelle has met with the Community Relations Officer and the ADA at the College who have all told the AI he has to do this and he still objects. Apparently he has been to the ethics committee at MUN on it and has requested a formal letter signed by everyone that demands he do this.
- October Maintaining the College as Training Partner Discussion with Michelle about the advantages and disadvantages of having the College as the training partner - or more specifically, having the Academic Instructors hired through the College's Collective agreement. They do, by the terms of their contract - "teach" 22 hours a week with a guaranteed 8 hours for prep time for a total work week of 30 hours. Most of them work to the terms of this contract. The participants are on site 35 hours per week.
- The frustration is that for the cost of their salary, we could easily have hired someone who would work 40 hours a week - 35 with the participants and 5 for prep time. The co-ordinating role of the Community Relations Officer is an advantage - as is the ability to take ABE and other resources off the shelf, access to the Counsellors, and to the Curriculum Design Specialist.
- November Revised Roles for the AI Reviewed next edition of the Job ad for future Academic Instructors worked with RNDA for an entirely new Roles and Responsibilities document for the AI.
- November Revisions to the Social and Economic Landscape. Discussed with the Evaluation committee the Social & Economic Landscape document and realistic revisions of the terms of reference for it and the lack of available data for comparison purposes. Revisions were accepted.
- February 2003 Reviewed and commented on Michelle's draft "Roles of the of the Skill Set Designer" document.
- March Reviewed Michelle's draft of Criteria/Guidelines for selecting Private Business Partners for Bridging the Gap and provided my comments.

These were just a sample of the types of organic interventions provided by the evaluator for the project.

2.5 Research Instruments

There were many research instruments used for primary research in the evaluation of Bridging the Gap including the following: (Full text is included as Appendix A)

- Initial CLN Focus Group Questions
- Concluding CLN Focus Group Questions
- Initial Client Attitude Assessment
- Concluding Client Attitude Assessment
- Initial Employment Partner Questions
- Concluding Employment Partner Questions
- Initial Sponsor Questions
- Concluding Sponsor Questions
- Initial Academic Instructor Questions
- Concluding Academic Questions
- Initial Project Co-ordinator Questions
- Concluding Project Co-ordinator Questions
- Associate District Administrator Interview Questions

3.0 Chronology of the Project

The essence of the Bridging the Gap model is to link employment and education. There are nine links in all (See Appendix A). Specifically, the model works as follows:

- Create a team as the Community Learning Network to manage, advise and direct the project. Typically this is a team of federal, provincial and non-governmental agencies specializing in social, human and economic development in the area.
- Secure an employment partner from the private sector who is in a growth or renewal phase and will be seeking 8-10 new, full-time employees within a year.
- Recruit and screen individuals in the geographic area who have not yet completed high school and are interested and able to work. Normally the individuals are on some form of government assistance.
- College of the North Atlantic then works with the employment partner to develop a 20 week in-class curriculum outline which is completely tailored to the requirements of that work-site. There is an additional 20 weeks of practical instruction as well which is on site.
- Funding is secured for the College to teach the curriculum and for the sponsor to hire a Program Co-ordinator.
- Individuals are given the opportunity to learn the skills and knowledge required to be successful in the employment partners workplace. This will normally include reading, math, and computer taught with all examples and assignments drawn directly from workplace relevant material.
- In addition, clients undertake personal development (resume preparation, public speaking, self-confidence building, etc.) and Workplace Health and Safety programs..
- At the end of the 40 weeks, the employment partner has the option to hire any or all of the individuals. They have had the opportunity to observe and work with them over the last 40 weeks.

For Bridging the Gap, Pilot Project Phase II, the following is the chronology of events that happened throughout the project. Where a specific site was different, it is noted

3.1 Site Selection

The site selection process for the second pilot was very deliberate with specific criteria:

- There had to be a variety of geographic locations throughout the province, including Labrador
- The sponsoring body had to be eager and capable
- There had to be a variety of demographic (small and large) and economic (prosperous and not so prosperous) circumstances.

Once areas who were interested had made their intentions and capabilities clear, the Zone 15 CLN reviewed them and made final selections, based upon the criteria.

3.2 Meeting in Clarenville

Once all of the selections were made, there was a meeting held in Clarenville where representatives of all of the Sponsoring agencies and the CLNs got together to meet and review processes, to understand the concept and to forge relationships among themselves. Some participants felt this was a very useful multi-day session (it was sponsored by the Office of Learning Technologies) and others felt it should have been more practical and focused. The meeting itself was not a part of this evaluation.

3.3 Employment Partner Selection

Each sponsoring agent then undertook the process of selection an Employment Partner. In some cases, it had been done, or almost done, as part of the Site Selection process, and in others (such as Baie Verte) the intended employment partner changed their minds and withdrew and another selection process had to start.

While there were guidelines for selection of the employment partner in the links provided to the project sponsors in each of the sites, many of the recommendations arising from the Pilot are about strengthening them and making them more specific. While most of the employment partners selected were very strong, others were not and it is anticipated this might have been avoided with more stringent employment partner criteria.

The role of RNDA in employment partner selection, once the project sponsor was in place, was purely in an advisory capacity. The final selection of employment partner was the choice of the project sponsor.

3.4 Role of the College of the North Atlantic

The College of the North Atlantic (CNA) is a major partner in Bridging the Gap. They play pivotal roles not only in the training of participants, but also in the skill set design, curriculum development, and the participant testing and screening.

The College provides supports on many fronts: provision of resource materials, training space, are active members of all of the CLNs, Human Resource Management and Recruitment and advisory supports, based on their 40 years of experience as the public college of Newfoundland and Labrador. Community Economic Development is a part of their mandate and Bridging the Gap intersects this mandate with corporate and individualized training.

The Student Services Counselors of the campuses working with Bridging the Gap assisted in the selection of appropriate tests for screening participants, administered those tests and interpreted their results. While many people involved in the project felt the process was too rigorous and verged on intimidating, the Counselors were working with the model they were given, and they carried out their work professionally.

The Skill Set Design process of Bridging the Gap is somewhat unique. A Curriculum Designer at the College (Walter Smith) had developed a process in the first phase of the Pilot whereby he could assess a workplace and develop the key objectives for the Skill Set Design. He would develop this in a matter of days and this would be the course outline for the Academic & Practical Instructors to follow and build

upon. Appendix 'B' includes a sample of one of the Program Plans. There is some concern about the future abilities of other college Curriculum Designers being able to replicate Mr. Smith's practice as he is retiring from the College in 2003. This is an issue for future Bridging the Gap initiatives.

The College also developed the job descriptions and recruited the Academic Instructors for all the sites. Again, the college has professional Human Resource staff and process in place that were relied upon, and, in most cases, they worked well. However, in one site in particular, there were several challenges about the selection of the Academic Instructor. Because the College is unionized, there are numerous parameters within which they can operate when they are hiring. These include seniority, definitions of qualified, and pay scales.

One of the results of this Pilot was a collaboration between the provincial co-ordinator and one of the College HR managers. Based upon the recommendations of the Project Co-ordinators as well as the Academic Instructors, they developed guidelines for recruiting future Bridging the Gap Academic Instructors as well as their job descriptions. (Appendix C shows the revisions).

These focus primarily on how being an Academic Instructor (Academic Instructor) with Bridging the Gap is different from an Adult Basic Education Instructor, particularly in the areas of curriculum design and development, industry knowledge and experience and required flexibility around hours of work. Future initiatives of Bridging the Gap should work more smoothly with these recruitment and job description guidelines developed and in place.

There were additional challenges to the Academic Instructors. These included:

- They were required to learn, very quickly, a lot about the industry of the employment partner. This proved to be doubly challenging for the sites that were remote from information resources, such as a library, and were on dial-up (in some cases long distance) access to the Internet. The College sent as many materials as they could to support the instructors, but this proved to be a very stressful component of the Academic Instructors work.
- The clients/participants were at many different academic levels and some had been away from school for 2 years, some 30 years. What often occurred was the more advanced participants assisted the less advanced, but it was a real challenge for the AIs.
- Dealing with personal issues and conflicts among the participants.

Overall, all of the AIs enjoyed their work. They found it challenging, but also very rewarding. Many of them are ABE instructors and saw Bridging the Gap as a way to bring more meaning to the ABE instruction and more motivational as it was so focused on a specific workplace and a specific job.

3.5 Community Learning Networks (CLNs)

The Community Learning Networks (CLNs) play a pivotal role in the management and overall direction of each of the Bridging the Gap sites, and the Zone 15 CLN played a role in advising and assisting with the entire second phase of the project, as they were experienced from the development of the concept and the implementation of Phase I.

Typically, the CLN includes the following representation (although each regions make-up is reflective of that community and was different):

- *Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC)* – Two representatives: the Labour Market Development Agreement Coordinator for the region, and either a Program Officer or an

Employment Counsellor

- *Human Resources and Employment (HRE)* – Career Development Specialist
- *Industry, Trade and Rural Development (DITRD)* – Economic Development Officer
- *Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA)* – Local Representative
- *College of the North Atlantic (CONA)* – Administrator of the local campus and/or the Community Relations Officer
- *Employment Partner*
- *Project Sponsor*

While not making the CLN too large, others who may have been included were representatives from the School Board, Rural Development Associations, Zonal Economic Development Boards, Ability Employment Corporations, Municipality, Business Development Centres and others.

Being involved in the CLN requires a moderate time commitment from the representatives, and like most process, some were more committed than others. Most participated and assisted in any way they could as they saw the linkages between the social and economic development that were at work in Bridging the Gap. Some participated because their clients (either the participants or the employment partner) were involved and this was another way to support their potential success.

The CLNs met monthly (in most cases) and there were subcommittees (such as the Skill Set Design sub-committee) who met more frequently. The CLN proved to be an excellent sounding board and support for the Project Co-ordinators as this was where Co-ordinators would bring questions and issues. Most of the CLN members knew each other previous to Bridging the Gap and had worked together on mutual projects, but for some, this was a way to better get to know their regional partners and there developed a common goal of social and economic development in the region.

The success of the CLNs was due largely to their:

- sharing of their knowledge and experience,
- coming from different perspectives,
- commitment to the process and the goal
- ability to work collaboratively
- supported by (and offering support to) the Project Co-ordinator
- a dynamic, but not domineering project sponsor who saw the CLN as a resource and an asset
- sincerely interested in working with Random North to test the Bridging the Gap model, and
- long term desire to see economic and social improvement in their region

Where these components weren't present, the CLN was not as successful, as was the case in Zone 9. (See discussion of the Zone 9 Highlights.)

There was some suggestions that CLNs could have been improved if one member was a subject matter expert in the industry of the employment partner, which certainly has merit, but is not always possible,

considering the geographic locations of some of the sites and that many of the government experts are regulatory in their mandate and not focused on industry, economic, or social development.

3.6 Project Co-ordinators

If any single position was most pivotal to the success of the Bridging the Gap initiatives, it was the Project Co-ordinator. She (they were all female) was the organizer, manager, book-keeper, communicator, confidant, counselor and brainstorming resource for the CLN, the Academic Instructor, the Project Sponsor, the Employment Partner, Random North and, most importantly, the Clients.

The project co-ordinators were hired by the CLNs and the Project sponsors in each region and were hired in advance (where possible) of the selection of the employment partner and the participants, and stayed on after to write reports and make recommendations.

Overall, the PCs were dynamic and capable. Sometimes their direction and Student Services from either their Project Sponsor or their CLN was less than clear which made it challenging for them. In Zone 15, one PC handled two sites and this worked out fine. The pre-conditions to that success were that the sites were only a 30 minutes drive apart, they had staggered start and finish dates, they dealt with the same College campus, most of the CLN members were in the same community, travel and remoteness was not as much of an issue and the PC was an exceptionally good organizer and communicator. Were these conditions to be met again, this is recommended as it worked quite efficiently. It is important to note however, that these conditions are often not met.

3.7 Clients

The clients are the primary focus and goal of Bridging the Gap. They are the people for whom the model is designed, and it is with their situations in mind, that the model sponsors constantly seek to improve it.

The parameters for selecting clients were as follows. They are reflective of the inclusive approach of Bridging the Gap

- 1) Adults who did not complete a Secondary School Program/ABE/GED and have barriers to employment due to limited academic skills
2. Unemployed and/or under employed (if a potential participant is under employed, then HRE or HRDC Employment Counsellors would determine on an individual basis if the client fits the criteria/meaning of being under employed)
- 3) Settled in community/region and do not want to leave the province to find employment
- 4) The partnering employment partner prior to the assessment and selection process has identified the academic skills required to perform the workplace task/duties. This must be taken into consideration when selecting training participants.
- 5) If at all possible, all participants should have close to the same range of academic skills, but not mandatory. It can be difficult to teach the participants when their academic skills are varied, but not impossible to do.
- 6) Employability Skills (Participants must have a willingness to learn - this area focuses on the

personality of the individual- this would become more evident after potential participants are assessed by the local College Campus)

- Academic Skills: Those skills that provide the basic foundation to get, keep and progress on a job, and to achieve the best results.
 - * Communication Skills
 - * Thinking Abilities
 - * Learning Skills
- Personal Management Skills: The combination of skills, attitudes and behaviours required to get, keep and progress on a job, and to achieve the best results.
 - * Positive Attitudes and Behaviour
 - * Responsibility
 - * Adaptability
- Teamwork Skills: Those skills needed to work with others on a job and to achieve the best results.
 - * Working with others

7) One or more - training/experience/interest in the chosen industry

Clients ranged in age from early twenties to early fifties. They ranged in academic levels from Elementary level to almost High School completion. They ranged in attachment to the work force to no previous attachment to frequent and intermittent attachment. They were both male and female. Many were supporting young families and some were still living at home. All were on some form of government assistance and none had completed high school. All were hopeful of finding meaningful, long-term employment to enable them to work and live in their community and to earn their own pay cheques instead of being reliant upon government assistance.

Their individual circumstances around why they didn't complete high school included:

1. Going to work,
2. Not succeeding in the school system of the time,
3. Learning disabilities,
4. Starting a family

Almost all of the clients were "physical" learners - they preferred to learn by doing rather than by studying and they loved to be in the outdoors, not in an office (or a classroom, for that matter). Most had low self-esteem and many other personal and social issues in their background. One of the key components of Bridging the Gap is that it works to build the whole of the person, not just their

employment skills - it recognizes the linkages between self-esteem and confidence and the ability to secure and succeed at a work site.

All of the participants improved in their academic and personal skills, some dramatically. Their self-esteem improved as did their communication and inter-personal skills.

3.9 Practical Instructors

The practical instructors were the supervisors of the practical component of Bridging the Gap. They were employees of the employment partner and ensured the work the clients did was to the standards and quality of other employees. The practical instructors were valuable in their contribution to the learning process at the work site, and they were an important part of the overall team. Their contributions and feedback were critical to the success on the site of the participants and enabled the clients to get an excellent grasp of the required workplace skills and processes.

3.10 Random North Development Association

RNDA is the provincial sponsor for BTG. As such they were responsible for:

5. advice, issue resolution and support to the individual sites, particularly at the beginning of the project;
6. book-keeping for the entire project and financial accountability for all of the sites to the funding partners
7. managing the formative evaluation
8. promotion and public awareness
9. documenting "lessons learned" and best practices
10. negotiating with partners such as the College
11. developing and adapting policies, procedures, roles, and responsibilities as required (see Appendix for an example of the Roles and Responsibilities around the Skills Set Design) and
12. acting as a liaison between individual sites and the partners, as required.

There is no doubt Random North has done a superlative job in their management and implementation of this second phase of the project. Michelle Brown, the provincial coordinator uses superb communication and consensus-building skills to assist people and Ina Marsh, the book-keeper/financial manager for the project kept meticulous records and was thorough in her interpretation of the "rules of expenditure" from the funding partners.

In some cases, RNDA was observed as being little too involved in the projects. Most of the CLNs and Project Coordinators appreciated their focus on detail and constant availability, others wanted to be more independent. RNDA recognized this and they were less involved with some sites than others. To be continually successful, it is important the management team at RNDA always strive to recognize the amount of desired involvement varies with the approach, experience, and personalities of the CLN.

3.12 Achievement Ceremonies

Each site had their own Achievement Ceremonies close to the end of their programs. The

Achievement Ceremonies were different at each site, but all were designed and carried out mostly by the clients and the Project Coordinator. For many clients this was the first time they had been part of an Achievement Ceremony and there were many graduation cards and gifts from family and friends. This event was a public recognition of the hard work and commitment of the clients and provided an opportunity for members of the CLN and other community members could applaud their efforts. It was an emotional and climatic event for many of the clients, their families and the CLNs. The Achievement Ceremonies were almost all covered by the local media as well - providing additional promotion to the program.

3.13 Employment

Employment of the clients at the end of the projects is the goal of each of them. Each client, when asked why they joined Bridging the Gap in the first place, responded "to get the job".

Fortunately, most of the clients did get employment at the end of their projects. This was a result of many factors, including successful training, hard-working participants, supportive CLNs, funding partners providing Targeted Wage Subsidies and committee and relentless Project Coordinators.

Unfortunately, some of the employment partners were not ready to employ people at the end of the projects. In these cases, the clients found either part-time work with them or they found work in other sectors. Some of them are considering developing their own businesses.

4.0 Highlights, Challenges and Achievements of the 5 Sites

This section will provide the background to each of the sites from the evaluator's perspective.

As well, each site analysis should be read in conjunction with the respective social and economic landscape. The Landscapes are a key part of the evaluation of the Bridging the Gap program. They describe the social and economic state of the communities taking part in this phase of the BTG pilot. It does this with the goal of allowing the reader to better understand the broad picture of the social and economic opportunities and issues that exist in the partnering communities.

The landscapes compare information at the community, zonal, and provincial level in order to get at the larger picture. The information is then further divided into 4 headings, drawing upon the analytical framework of the Strategic Social Plan of Newfoundland and Labrador.

- Educated People
- Self-Reliant People
- Prosperous People
- People Living within Sustainable Communities/Zones

In all cases, the latest available statistical information is referenced, which varies from 1996 to 2001. Again, for ease of formatting, these are found in the appendix and should be read at this point.

In addition, each site has a complete report of 1-2 volumes written by the program co-ordinator. For all of the details of the program operation, these are commended to the reader as well.

4.1 Triton

Highlights

The Triton site of Bridging the Gap had many initial hurdles. Originally intended to be a Baie Verte area based project, a potential employment sponsor was engaged and the Baie Verte Development Association had signed on as the partner. However, the terms of the pilot were not satisfactory to the original employment partner and they withdrew. Within days, Jason Roberts of Triton Ocean Products had agreed to take on the project for his new Mussel Processing facility being developed in Roberts Arm. While this was not technically within the geographic jurisdiction of the Baie Verte Development Association (BVDA), they still considered it within their economic development mandate (within the overall zone) and were delighted to work with a new company.

The highlight of this project was, without a doubt, the field trip to the Boston Seafood Show. All the participants, the project co-ordinator and several other stakeholders traveled to Boston to attend the Show and to staff the booth of Triton Ocean Products. There was a lot of teamwork required to bring together the logistics and the funding for the trip, but for many of the participants it was their "trip of a life time" where they explored over 1,000 other booths and received an excellent overall view of the seafood processing industry and the competition of Triton Ocean Products.

The employment partner in Triton is a driving force as an entrepreneur. All the participants had close

contact with Jason and developed a very good appreciation of what it takes to be an entrepreneur and the work, time, effort and money required to start a new company. This is a valuable lesson and the participants developed a greater empathy for him and his entrepreneurial efforts as a result.

There were 12 clients in Triton, the largest of all of the sites.

Challenges

The challenges to this site were:

- The Project Co-ordinator was not hired until later in the project, so the Community Relations Officer of the College of the North Atlantic in Baie Verte filled her shoes. This was quite demanding on the CRO, but he carried out the job quite well, by all reports;
- There was considerable travel required for the Project Co-ordinator as her office was located in Baie Verte and the site and classroom was in Triton, approximately 1.5 hours drive (and very difficult in the winter);
- Few of the members of the CLN were based in Roberts Arm or that area and had to travel a considerable distance to attend the meetings. This was a particular challenge in winter driving conditions;
- The Academic Instructor had no knowledge of the mussel industry (while she was quite experienced in teaching Adult Basic Education). In addition, she was further disadvantaged by her inability to quickly and inexpensively use the Internet (Robert's Arm is on dial-up access) or a nearby library or resource centre to find materials on the industry;
- The Academic Instructor worked on a College contract with no more than 30 hours of work per week (and some of that was to be for preparation and curriculum design). This proved to be a challenge (as it did at all of the sites) when the clients were on site for at least 35 hours per week;
- The mussel processing facility was not ready in time for the students to start their practical training and they did not receive the full 20 weeks planned practical instruction. Instead they received 28 weeks of academic instruction and 12 weeks of practical instruction. This was a challenge for the Academic Instructor as she had to prepare more lessons and frustrating for the clients as they were eager to be working in the plant as soon as possible;
- There was a significant variation of academic skills among the clients, ranging from grade school several decades ago to secondary school only a couple of years before. This made the academic instruction even more challenging as there was such a variety of abilities and confidence levels.

Achievements

There were many significant achievements at the Triton site:

- The teamwork required to organize and complete the field trip to Boston was considerable and

was a real morale booster for the group;

- All of the participants, except one, considered Bridging the Gap to be exceptional, some said it had life altering impact on them and their families, enabling them to finally have a "normal" life with a job, an income, improved education and a future to which they could look forward in their home community;
- The project sponsor (the Baie Verte Development Association and the Emerald Zone) were completely delighted with the results of Bridging the Gap in Robert's Arm. They have been involved in many "projects" and "programs" over the years, but this is one of the few they felt was so well tailored to the challenges of economic and social development in rural Newfoundland. They are eagerly awaiting the opportunity to do it again;

4.2 Lethbridge

Highlights

The Lethbridge site was one of two (Newfoundland Hardwoods in Clarenville being the other) in Zone 15 sponsored by the Random North Development Association. Thus, the CLN, Project Co-ordinator, College Campus and sponsor had to manage two of everything (two sets of employment partner selection process, client recruitment processes, etc.) This experiment to see if it is feasible to run more than one project at a time appeared to be successful. There were several variables in favour of its success:

- highly organized and motivated project co-ordinator;
- both sites were within a 20 minute travel distance of each other;
- time differences between when the projects started and finished;
- experienced CLN, campus and sponsor, as they had worked with the first phase of Bridging the Gap in Catalina.

Lethbridge and the surrounding area, while quite close to the relatively urban service centre of Clarenville, experiences a considerably different culture. They are much more closely aligned with the more rural communities in terms of their economic diversification and development. In addition, the communities are also very close knit and "small town" in outlook.

There were 8 clients at the Lethbridge site, one of the smallest groups.

Challenges

There were many challenges at the Lethbridge site:

- the employment partner was not ready for the project. They are a newly formed agricultural co-operative with a new processing and storage capability. They were still working out how they were going to do business themselves and did not (as a group) have the managerial capacity to effectively work with the project. This is not to say the employment partners didn't work hard on the project, nor that the clients didn't get a quality experience - they did- however, the ultimate goal of full employment with the employment partner could not be achieved.

- many of the individual farmers had people on lay-off at the end of the project and were therefore unable to hire the participants at the end of the program;
- because the project started near the harvest time and went through to the early spring, clients did not get the opportunity to get a lot of experience in the planting cycle of a farm (they felt they should have had a full year to work with all aspects of the farm)..
- the original academic instructor was hired by the College without an interview - he was on the seniority list as an "Academic Instructor". He left the program mid-stream after considerable stress and was replaced with a new, quite capable instructor. However, the time for curriculum development had been "used" by the original Academic Instructor leaving the replacement Academic Instructor in a bind in terms of how to delivery the training. By all accounts he succeeded, but only due to considerable (additional and unpaid) effort by him.
- there was considerable inter-client personal challenges and developments throughout this project which were brought into the classroom and required interventions from the Project Co-ordinator, the Academic Instructor and the College campus. This stress was compounded by the ongoing frustration of clients as they realized they would not be getting employment from the farmers at the end of the project. One individual in particular caused the vast majority of problems and should have been (and could have been) removed from the program in hindsight, but was not.
- another individual did not have the physical capacity to do many of the tasks on a farm. This was not screened for in the client recruitment and selection process.
- four out of the five sites had differential income for clients, depending upon whether they were HRE or HRDC recipients. Nowhere was this more difficult to deal with than in Lethbridge, where some clients were receiving as little as \$108/week and other receiving more than twice that. This was a constant sore point throughout the project. This was a funding issue at each of the departments and was beyond the power of the Bridging the Gap team to change.

Achievements

Despite the long list of challenges at the Lethbridge site, there were also many achievements:

- one of the clients completed her Grade 12 and is considering taking further post-secondary training;
- all of the clients worked together to develop several ideas for starting their own businesses and/or using secondary processing for the produce from the farms. They did a presentation to the farmers as well as a more public presentation of their ideas and the products to a group of government and economic development representatives. This included power point presentations, cooking, presenting and the like. It was very well received and the clients were delighted with their success. Several of them are interested in starting their own businesses.
- Several of the clients went on to employment in other sectors. While they didn't get jobs immediately in the sector for which they were trained, they did attribute their success (and their much more attractive and comprehensive resumes) to what they learned from Bridging the Gap.

- In Lethbridge, the participants bagged and sold hampers of vegetables and were able to retain the \$3/hamper commission as an incentive to sell. This experience gave them good hands on exposure to what the market is looking for in terms of price, quality, packaging, sales convenience, etc. They have also been given exposure to the owners and produce managers of stores and what they see in the local vegetable markets.

4.3 Clarenville

Highlights

In many ways the Clarenville site was one of the best and most successful of the projects, but it can also be said it was the easiest. Newfoundland Hardwoods as the employment partner is a longstanding company with professional management and a unionized workforce. The work is highly paid (\$18/hour and up) and there is an existing work culture of the importance of safety, human resource development and teamwork. In addition, the pool of potential clients from which to draw was much larger (being situated in a centralized service centre), with few, if any challenges of travel or geography.

However, this type of company is atypical for small isolated areas of Newfoundland and Labrador. So, while all are delighted with the success of the Clarenville site, it is, in some ways, not comparing apples to apples, when you compare it to the other sites which have very different realities.

There were 8 clients in the Clarenville site.

Challenges

There were few challenges with the Clarenville site. The clients loved the work, the company loved the project and the union was delighted to see such an investment in their future members. It was a win-win situation all around.

This is the only site of the five which was unionized, and the union was brought in as a partner in all of the workings of Bridging the Gap. There were no challenges around working in a unionized environment at this work site.

Achievements

The achievements were many:

- 100% employment and satisfaction for the participants;
- The first female in the history of Newfoundland Hardwoods to work outside of the office;
- A company wanting to participate in another Bridging the Gap and feeling they benefitted enormously from the project.

4.4 Port Hope Simpson

Highlights

Port Hope Simpson was the smallest and the most isolated of all the communities in the Phase II of Bridging the Gap, and had some of the highest unemployment rates and lowest education levels of all of the communities.

That being said, Port Hope Simpson is also an area of anticipated growth and a possible centre of regionalization with the Labrador Highway and the possible centralization of air traffic to the south coast through the community, so there is an air of optimism for the future and opportunity not found in other communities with similar statistics.

A large percentage of the residents of Port Hope Simpson are of members of the Métis nation, the Labrador Métis nation participated as a funding partner, and many of the clients were Métis. This is the only aboriginal involvement in Bridging the Gap, and is one of the reasons the site is unique.

Additionally, it is the only site located in Labrador. Port Hope Simpson is on the south coast of Labrador and, until 2003, was only accessible by air, sea or snow mobile. 2003 saw the extension of the Labrador Highway through the community and has removed some of the isolation of the area. They have also, only this year, seen the introduction of local dial-up internet connectivity.

Finally, Port Hope Simpson was the site where Bridging the Gap experimented with having two employment partners (both sawmill operators), as well as silviculture experience with the Department of Forest Resources (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador).

There were 7 clients in Port Hope Simpson.

Challenges

There were challenges in the Port Hope Simpson project. These included:

- There was a significant variation of academic skills among the clients, ranging from grade school several decades ago to secondary school only a couple of years before. This made the academic instruction even more challenging as there was such a variety of abilities and confidence levels.
- Because of the lower levels of educational completion, there was considerable more anxiety among clients about the academic portion of the program. However, all participants improved their academic skill levels considerably.
- Having two employment partners as well as a silviculture component to the practical training, presented considerable logistical challenges to the Project Co-ordinator and the clients.
- There were considerable extra travel costs for the Port Hope Simpson site. However, most of the members of the CLN were well experienced with this situation and they were able to use video and audio conferencing quite effectively. It did not diminish their strong team spirit at all.
- Similar to Lethbridge, there was a change in Academic Instructor part way through the program. However, different than Lethbridge, the departing Academic Instructor had done a considerable amount of the curriculum design, and although it was a challenge for the incoming Academic Instructor to pick up the course material and learn about the industry, she managed

quite well. She also ended up contributing considerable amounts of time after hours and unpaid researching the industry.

- There was a small pool of applicants for the Bridging the Gap - this was partially due to the timing of the program and partially due to the small population and lower community awareness of what was entailed in Bridging the Gap.

Achievements

There were many accomplishments in Port Hope Simpson, including:

- trainers were brought into the community for lumber grading and saw maintenance courses, both of which are of great value to the employment partners, the individual clients, as well as the industry in the area at large.
- both companies have received approval for targeted wage subsidy for all of the participants involved in Bridging the Gap.
- All of the participants were employed.

4.5 Burgeo

Highlights

Burgeo was a challenging site from many fronts: upfront, it was the least inclusive and most confrontational of all the teams (until the original sponsor withdrew and a new sponsor came forward) and it had a struggling new business as an employment partner, with many other, sometimes conflicting, involvements with CLN team members.

In addition, Burgeo is the second most isolated community (next to Port Hope Simpson), but, as compared to Port Hope Simpson, Burgeo faces few economic development opportunities and there is a general frustration in the community at the many unsuccessful attempts at economic development and diversification from the fishery there.

The original Burgeo Bridging the Gap sponsor was the Burgeo Diversification and Development Board (BDDB). Unfortunately the BDDB did not fully buy into the teamwork concept of Bridging the Gap and sought to usurp the roles and responsibilities of the CLN. The Board was also a financial partner in the operations of the employment sponsor, Coastal Growers, which proved to be somewhat of a tripwire when the BDDB withdrew as sponsor and the Community Education Network became the sponsor.

Both project sponsors and the CLN had difficulty with the role of the provincial sponsor, Random North Development Association. They felt strongly RNDA had too great a role to play and that they, as the managing team, were not empowered to make decisions about their own project and project budget.

The west and south coast of the province, particularly around the Stephenville & Port au Port area has a long tradition of Community Economic Development (CED), and the College has been a key leader in that tradition - this is where they teach the CED program. As such, they felt strongly they did not need the leadership of RNDA, they were experienced enough in their grasp of the CED principles and

processes to deliver Bridging the Gap on their own.

The employment partner, Coastal Growers, grow several varieties of hothouse tomatoes. As a company, they had grown from a project of the BDDDB and there were still many financial and legal connections between the two. As any new company (and leaders new to entrepreneurship) they had many operational, financial and marketing challenges. The Bridging the Gap project was helpful to them, but they were challenged to juggle all of the balls.

There were 9 clients at the Burgeo site, the second largest group.

Challenges:

- the Executive Director of the BDDDB personally challenged RNDA on the "intrusive and invasive" role they were playing in the project;
- the Project Co-ordinator was one of the most inexperienced of all the Project Co-ordinators and sometimes found it difficult to deal with all the challenges she faced. This caused stress at several points of the program;
- the spouses of the two owners were clients of Bridging the Gap and were the first ones to gain employment at the end of the project. It can be argued they would have gotten the employment regardless. As of July 2003, one other person from Bridging the Gap is working at Coastal Growers, and others are called in on an as needed basis.
- the group tried to plan a field trip to Nova Scotia to visit a similar operation, but they were refused permission to transfer funds within their budget. There were many miscommunications about this, in terms of whose "fault" it was, but the end result was a degree of frustration and bitterness between the clients, the Project Co-ordinator, the CLN and RNDA. The decision on funding was with the funding agency.
- the CLN was not "knit together" by the Project Co-ordinator (under original instruction of the Executive Director of the BDDDB) until the second project sponsor, the Community Education Network assumed their responsibilities.

Achievements

- Once the project sponsor changed from the BDDDB to the Community Education Network, things moved along much more smoothly and the entire team took much more control over the project.
- The College provided superlative support and services (as they did in all sites) often with the Associate District Administrator, the Community Relations Officer, the Academic Instructor, other instructors and the Student Services Counselor all pitching in to ensure the project ran smoothly.
- For many of the participants, this project was one of the greatest rays of hope and accomplishment of their lives. For some, it was the first time they had ever earned an income and had the opportunity to learn in a structured environment as an adult. While few received employment from the employment partner, some plan to continue taking ABE to get their high school education, based upon their newfound self-confidence in learning.

5.0 Cost/Benefit Analysis of Bridging the Gap

5.1 How we calculate the cost/benefit analyses

Determining the costs and the benefits of programs and services can be approached from many different ways and calculated using different formulae and variables. For the purposes of the formative evaluation of the pan-provincial Bridging the Gap program, six different perspectives will be taken:

- the client,
- the employment partner,
- the project sponsor,
- the Income support System,
- the College of the North Atlantic, and
- the community

Each will be calculated in a different way. The intended result is to be as inclusive as possible of both the costs and the benefits of Bridging the Gap.

5.2 To the Client

For all of the clients, the benefits of participating in Bridging the Gap far outweighed the costs. Some of their comments included:

I'm going to try my best to get a job at the end of this program. And then I'll work it out from there. I'd like to get a job here and then I don't have to go away and work.

If I were working here, I'd have peace of mind. It is an excellent opportunity to get involved in the community. Chance to be home and working. I'm not going to frig up a good thing (excuse me for swearing). Getting up in the morning I feel like I have a new life.

Specifically, their benefits and costs included:

BENEFITS	COSTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employment (for most) which is anticipated to be long term. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ineligible for further sponsored training for a number of years
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increased overall employability for all - they now have experience, better communication and interpersonal skills and a learning portfolio of many courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hopes and expectations are raised - disappointment if they are not employed through the employment sponsor

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employment in their communities, lowering their overall costs and providing enhanced security to their families 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • heightened self esteem from accomplishment and support received from the group and the co-ordinator 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • greater understanding of their employment partner and the industry in which it operates 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increased academic abilities and confidence 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eligible to continue their formal education, if so desired 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • greater understanding of and ability to work in teams 	

5.3 To the Employment Partner

The employment partners also benefitted greatly from Bridging the Gap. In interviews with the Evaluator, many had expressed initial skepticism and confusion about the project, but by the end, every employment partner spoke highly of the project and the abilities of the clients. Many employment partners indicated they would not have hired these individuals if it had not been for Bridging the Gap.

BENEFITS	COSTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • local labour pool trained on the specific and multiple work requirements of their workplace as well as the industry locally, provincially and internationally. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time required for the ongoing management and communication of the project. No employment partner thought it was too onerous.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to 20 weeks of practical training which was productive labour for the employment partner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • logistical management to ensure the clients were learning about all aspects of the business in a safe and supervised environment

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> future employees received industry-specific training (lumber grading & fork lift operator, for example); field trips to relevant sites and operations; and mandatory training such as occupational health and safety and first aid. All required or desired courses the company would have had to pay for. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> tailored curriculum developed for training to the needs of their workplace. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> policy and procedures manual developed for the work site 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A feeling of being "supported and assisted" by the partners in the project, and government generally. 	

5.4 To the Project Sponsor

All of the sponsors were community or zonal based economic development agencies and organizations. As such, the BTG basic objectives of encouraging long term employment, strengthening local businesses and communities development were also in the mandate of each of the sponsoring organizations.

BENEFITS	COSTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A new concept integrating an holistic approach to education and employment and tailored to the needs of rural Newfoundland and Labrador was proven successful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the time and logistical support to the project. No sponsor considered this to be onerous.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> up to 10 regional social and economic development officials (members of the Community Learning Network) focused their attention on one of the region's communities and gained knowledge of "what it takes" to make long term change happen. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> some of the sponsors had the opportunity to "prove their capabilities" to outside agencies 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Community Learning Networks are now an organization which may (and in some cases have) taken on other projects in addition to Bridging the Gap. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a trained and capable project co-ordinator in the area. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> enhanced public profile as the sponsors are able to "take some credit" for the success of the project 	

5.5 To the Income Support System

The income support system includes direct transfers of funding provided to clients by either the provincial or federal governments or an aboriginal body. In the case of Bridging the Gap, the agencies involved were:

- Human Resources and Development Canada/Labour Market Development Agreement of the Government of Canada; (HRDC/LMDA)
- Human Resources and Employment, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador (HRE)
- Métis Nation, Port Hope Simpson Labrador (MN)

All of the Bridging the Gap clients were receiving income assistance from one of these agencies, and over a period of time, many had received income support from more than one. Most of the Bridging the Gap clients had been receiving income support, in one form or another, over a long term period and many also had families, which increased the amount of income they were receiving.

One of the purposes of Bridging the Gap was to provide people with the opportunity to leave the income support system, which is why HRDC/LMDA, HRE and MN "sponsor" them to participate in the program.

Bridging the Gap is projected² to cost more than most other types of programs, but the returns are anticipated to be higher and over a longer period of time than most. While the evaluators searched for other programs to which to compare Bridging the Gap, none were found. Most are either employment supports (a wage subsidy to the employer, for example) or else are training only (tuition and living expenses subsidy directly to the client).

Take the Newfoundland Hardwoods site as an example. Based on one year of employment with Newfoundland Hardwoods, the 8 clients that were hired, in total will earn approximately \$280,000.00/year. HRDC's contribution to this site including Coordination, Skill Set Development and

²At the time of writing the evaluation, the final expenditures were not available.

Participant's weekly allowances, was approximately 175,000.00. This means based on just a one year period, the interventions of Bridging the Gap has paid for itself.

There have been many calculations done (and will be done by the individual agencies) on how this program saves the income support system money. The fundamental fact is that 35 individuals are now working at full time employment and a further 3 are working on a call-in basis. They are not drawing benefits from the income support system. Most of these jobs can be expected to be long term and full time, albeit some may be seasonal. These people will either have eliminated their (and their families) dependence on the income support system, or have reduced it dramatically. A situation which would not have happened without Bridging the Gap.

There are two primary reasons behind the higher costs of Bridging the Gap relative to other programs. First is the cost of project co-ordination and second is the cost of developing and delivering individualized training.

All of the Bridging the Gap sites had a Project Co-ordinator whose job it was to ensure each client had their needs met, that all logistics flowed smoothly, that the Community Learning Network was developed and running smoothly, that all the partners understood and fulfilled their roles and responsibilities, that all financial and other records were kept accurately and that liaison and communication among all the partners was open, clear and responsive. She (they were all female) was tasked with ensuring the project was a success in their region. In the estimation of the evaluator this is a crucial role. There was some discussion about the Academic Instructor also acting as the Project Co-ordinator, but every Academic Instructor thought this would be impossible, and the evaluator agrees.

The personal support from the Project Co-ordinator that most participants required to succeed at Bridging the Gap was considerable and is one of the key differences with this program. It understands clients have social and personal barriers and challenges that they cannot work through on their own, in addition to educational ones. As Project Co-ordinators reports demonstrate, a considerable amount of their (and the Academic Instructor's) time was spent on this. Changing the attitudes and beliefs of clients about themselves and "the system" was one of the successes of the program.

As well, there are considerable logistical and communication demands of this program that were met by the Project Co-ordinators. The Project Co-ordinators enabled the CLNs to function at a higher level, as the Project Co-ordinators would carry out the tasks of the CLN in most cases. Most of the CLNs, with the exception of Burgeo, considered the role of the Project Co-ordinator very important.

That being said, it is possible (and was done in Zone 15) for one Project Co-ordinator to run two Bridging the Gap sites, as long as they have staggered start and end dates and are close geographically (no more than 150km by road) to each other. This maximizes the time of the Project Co-ordinator and spreads the Project Co-ordinator cost over more participants.

The second reason the costs are higher is because of the individualized training. Again, this is a key ingredient to success for this project. The clients have not completed high school, and many have no interest or intent in completing it and going on to post-secondary training. However, Bridging the Gap enables them to cross that hurdle by taking training geared to their academic level, based on a specific workplace, integrated with required life skills, and balanced with equal time to practice their skills in the workplace. It can not be understated how important it is to both the employment partner as well as the clients to have this individualized training and curriculum development. It truly makes it a holistic and seamless approach to learning and working and is based upon principles of adult education. It is, however more expensive to design, develop and deliver training for each iteration of Bridging the Gap

BENEFITS	COSTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 35/44 individuals and families "off" the income support system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cost of income support for the individuals and families for the duration of the project
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a new education to employment model which is applicable to a large portion of the case load of rural Newfoundland and Labrador 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cost of training and project co-ordination
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> incorporation of the mandate of the income support system with that of the overall community learning network 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> precedent setting model for other provinces and other countries, based upon expressions of interest from these jurisdictions 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Best practices established for the model 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better appreciation of the dynamics of working with a private sector employment partner and many other community 	

5.6 To the College

The College of the North Atlantic is the province wide partner with Bridging the Gap. All of the site curriculum were developed by the College, all of the pre-selection testing, all the Academic Instructors were hired by and managed by the College, and the College was an active participant in each of the CLNs.

BENEFITS	COSTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting their legislated mandate of economic development in the province 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In some cases, travel and other overhead was higher for the College than anticipated. While the final numbers are not yet in, several campuses indicated they had just covered their costs, and some lost money on the contract.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building a solid reputation amongst both the Bridging the Gap clients for any future education they may pursue, the employment partner for future training delivery, as well as among the other members of the CLN 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> administration time for management and logistics. No campus, however, thought the requirements to participate in the project were onerous, not even the campus in Clarendville which had two projects.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> establishing a greater presence in communities where, except for Clarendville, there was no College Campus 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> excellent profiling of their "other" skills of the college to the community - curriculum development, counseling, testing, community economic development and others 	

5.7 To the Community

Ultimately the community was one of the biggest beneficiaries of Bridging the Gap. Many benefits accrued to each of the community and the smaller the community, the greater the impact.

BENEFITS	COSTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> up to 12 local people, previously on income assistance, achieved the training to work full time in a local business 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> local business was strengthened by an available, local, trained and knowledgeable labour pool. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> up to 10 regional social and economic development officials (members of the Community Learning Network) focused their attention on one of the region's communities and gained knowledge of "what it takes" to make long term change happen. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased profile through the Bridging the Gap web-site, reports, evaluation, newspaper and other media attention 	

6.0 Recommendations based on Best Practices and Lessons Learned

The following section summarizes the recommendations and best practices of this pilot of Bridging the Gap from the perspective of all of the participants. They are derived from telephone and in-person interviews, emails, conversations, and focus groups.

These have not been vetted for "correctness"; rather, they reflect the perceptions of the individual participants and the groups. It is intended the next iteration of Bridging the Gap can review these from the perspective of the recommenders and decide whether they should be implemented or not.

The following is a summary of the recommendations and best practices made by the stakeholders and participants of Bridging the Gap over the course of this evaluation. The detailed comments are contained in the Appendix Volume.

6.1 The Employment Partner

- The company must have a firm grasp of their short term and long term plans and the BTG program must not hinder the Business's Natural Development.
- The company must have strong leadership, organizational, and management skills.
- The company must not be relying on Government Funding for financial stability or potential growth.
- Employment partners must be a private sector business.
- Before a Community Learning Network selects their employment partner, it is critical that an interview process be conducted, the business/company fully understand the Bridging the Gap concept and their contribution to the program, and a meeting with the employment partner is held.
- It is recommended to review the screening/selecting process for selecting the employment partners.
- Should be guaranteed jobs at the end of it - not just a maybe
- The employment partner has to be partnership oriented. They can't demand to have control over everything.

6.2 Administration at the Site

- The book-keeping system must be automated.
- The Sponsor Organizations should be consulted when preparing the Policy and Procedure Manuals for the Coordinator and Participants.

- All of the contract agreements should be signed before the start of the project and before the budget is complete.

6.3 The Community Learning Network

- It needs to be made perfectly clear to each team member what the roles, responsibilities, and expectations are as a member of the CLN team.
- There should be someone on the CLN from the Industry of the employment partner.
- CLN meetings should be scheduled when the instructor is not in class and participants should have the opportunity to meet with the CLN.
- Spend more time "to process forming" of the CLN in the first place.
- There should be an accountability from the people that decide to not be involved in the CLN. There should be a recognition of the CLN members to their supervisors from RNDA or the sponsor, for example.

6.4 The Program Participants

- All participants should receive equitable compensation for participating in the program. This training allowance should be industry specific and provide realistic expectations of future earning potential.
- Select students with similar levels of education.

6.5 The Information Sharing Session

- There must be representatives at the Information Sharing Session from each funding agency to clearly explain the eligibility requirements and available compensation to the attendants.
- All verbal information presented at the Information Sharing Session should be handed out to each applicant in written form.
- All relevant information provided on each questionnaire must be verified for accuracy.

6.6 Participant Assessment and Selection Process

- At least 25 candidates should be forwarded to the College for assessments.
- A one-on-one interview combined with the TABE results would be sufficient to make an informed selection.
- Participants should be monitored on an ongoing basis and assessed in the first four weeks of the Program by the participant selection sub-committee.

- We should have asked them for a medical certificate for a clean bill of health and physically capable of completing the work tasks.
- Need to better judge the work ethic and initiative and working under pressure is a key component.
- Most of the College counsellors thought there was too much testing in some areas and need other, different screening processes for: learning disabilities, physical fitness, vision, and manual dexterity.
- The College can go in and do an inventory of skills and aptitudes and test for that the same way as they can go in and determine what is the curriculum involved. The two can be done together.
- Open it up to more people who have their high school and are still unemployed

6.7 Design and Adjust the Training Component

- More clarity surrounding the expectations and role of the College. It is crucial the College understand the instructor is responsible for curriculum design in addition to curriculum delivery.
- The instructors at each site should work together.
- The instructors require ample time initially to prepare before training actually begins. The instructors need time to learn about the industry. Also, the instructors need to spend time throughout the program viewing the practical component to be better able to integrate the practical processes and academic concepts.
- Important to take an holistic approach to designing the skill set component. Engage all partners from the Community Learning Network who will be directly involved with facilitating and implementing the academic and practical component of the Bridging the Gap model.
- Have a two-three day orientation session which includes mapping out skill sets that meet the needs of the participants and employment partners, ensure that the academic instructors have a good understanding of delivering holistic education programs, discuss measurements and indicators of success as it relates to the participants and the impacts this program has made on their personal growth, and ensure all partners have a comfort level with the integration of academic and practical components. It is essential that the academic instructor take all practical learning pieces applied and teaches them academically to participants.
- They should have done their field trips in more of the employment partners down times.
- The time to get permission for field trips is way too long. Have the funding built in for others.

6.8 Literacy/Workplace Skills Training (Delivery)

- The time required to deliver the training component should be dependent on the industry requirements. A standard 40 week program may not best suit the needs of every site.

- The one-on-one interviews with the training participants should be alternated with Focus Group Sessions and written testimonials. This variety may help the participants find their easiest method of communication.
- It is necessary to document students' progress both academically and practically. These lists can be periodically reviewed with each participants so they can see their progress throughout the program.
- It is important to allow the participants to take ownership of the training component. They can help determine potential areas for training and make recommendations to the Skill Set Design Team.
- 60/40 practical to academic components would have been better than 50/50 would have been better. Some of the academics probably weren't necessary. We needed more practical.
- Knowledge of what is required of the health and safety stuff up front.

6.9 Evaluation

- There should be more regional representation on the Pan Provincial Evaluation Team above and beyond the Coordinators.

6.10 Communications

- Communication and support at all levels is key to the successful implementation of the Bridging the Gap Model.
- Another recommendation is that we need to ensure that each person involved in Bridging the Gap knows what their role is from the beginning.
- We should have more media coverage? It is a good news story that people will enjoy reading and learning about.

6.11 Bridging the Gap Coordinators

- Bridging the Gap Coordinators should have a strong combination of education and experience in coordination. They should also have excellent interpersonal skills.
- One co-ordinator could do two projects if they were close together geographically, had staggered start dates, dealt with the same CLN team and the same HRE and HRDC officials.
- There was way too much co-ordination.
- It is important that the CLN not supervise the Co-ordinator, nor should the employer or the College. The third party sponsorship (the project sponsor) is an important part to ensure the best interests of the participants. (Not the employment partners or the College)

6.12 Sponsoring Organization

- The sponsoring organization should have experience in facilitating community-based initiatives. They should be familiar with working with other community groups/government departments and taking a team approach to implement programs.
- If Bridging the Gap is implemented in the future, it is important the sponsor organization fully understands the Bridging the Gap concept and are open to sharing responsibilities in implementing Bridging the Gap model.

6.13 Financial Partners & Financial Support to Participants

- Human Resources & Employment clients to negotiate training stipends with counselors instead of receiving one set amount.
- Funding should be administered through local offices. Meeting to be set up with Human Resources & Employment and Human Resources Development Canada to negotiate similar assistance.
- It is recommended the sponsor organization and financial partners (if pan provincial) have an information session within the appropriate local partnering offices.
- The participants won't have any income after they finish - the TWS might cover this off. HRDC is being very flexible. If there was some way there could be a cushion at the end, it would have been better.

6.14 Public College System

- Communication is important among campuses partnering in the Bridging the Gap Program. It is important to have consistency and the availability of all in-kind contributions should be the same at all college sites.
- When looking at the amount paid to the College, there needs to be a base amount (tuition fee) per student; more inline with regular students at the College.
- The students need a College place to do the work. Especially for access to the computers and the like. Having the classes at the campus dispels some of the fears of the College.
- In future, we would like more money to reflect the actual costs.

6.15 Academic Instructors

- With a program like Bridging the Gap, all staff directly in contact with the participants must have a strong understanding and appreciation for this client group.
- Review the job advertisement for academic instructors and consult with the College to ensure that the most suitable academic instructors are hired for the Bridging the Gap Program – not selecting instructors just because they are next on the seniority list. Instructors selected should go through an interviewing process. Important for the College to set up some guidelines to say that Bridging the Gap is different from traditional programs, and state that it is a 45-week contract and that the instructor has to commit to the full program. The instructor's length of

work day should be the same as the participant's work day. Curriculum design time to be included in the regular work day. There needs to be room for flexibility.

- Maybe on the beginning have all the sites starting the one time and all Academic instructors got together for a full week and better knew what they had to do. At least a few more of the teleconferences.
- Need more lead time. The instructor should have been started at least a month earlier (20 working days).
- For the instructor - when they are hired or interviewed their responsibilities should be outlined clearly up front.
- The Academic Instructor should have some back ground in that particular field. The job description should stress this. There also needs to be as much lead time as possible to give the academic instructor time to prepare for the program. The instructor should be hired several weeks before the program starts.
- Processes of selecting the instructor needs to be improved

7.0 Conclusions

The second phase of the pilot of Bridging the Gap was intended to test whether the model could be replicated in other zones, other types of employment partners and with other CLNs.

The formative evaluation took an active part of the 14 month Pilot as this report documents. The evaluation has presented many points of view and many recommendations on how to further improve the model.

There is no doubt Bridging the Gap was a success in all 5 sites. The proof of the success is in the results:

- The majority of clients were employed directly with the employment partner,
- All clients improved their self-esteem and academic abilities,
- Community Learning Networks were created to focus on community, economic and social development
- The communities themselves got a moral and economic boost
- Employment Partners have a pool of well trained employees from which to draw
- Funding and supporting government agencies made a positive impact on the clients and the communities

In addition the benefits of the program far outweigh the costs, from the perspective of all the participants in the process: clients, funding agencies, and communities.

There were many improvements made to the Bridging the Gap model and supports during this offering of the program. Future initiatives of Bridging the Gap can be improved by the consideration and integration of many of the recommendations provided in this document.

The type of approach and model underpinning Bridging the Gap ensures there will always be room for improvement, but that does not take away from its success as a program which bridges the gap between employment and education in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

Key to Acronyms

- AI: Academic Instructor. An employee of the College responsible for the development of curriculum, testing and the day to day educational experience of the clients.
- ABE: Adult Basic Education. This refers to a program of study offered by the College and other educational agencies to enable individuals who do not have strong literacy skills to improve them through a tri-level system (ABE I; ABE II; ABE III). Once complete, they can then move on to further educational opportunities.
- ADA: Associate District Administrator. This is the lead administrator at a campus of the College of the North Atlantic.
- BTG: Bridging the Gap:From Education to Employment refers to the overall model and implementation
- CLN: Community Learning Network, a community-controlled and directed team whose aim is to further community development and enhance the lives of rural communities by supporting and encouraging social and economic growth.
- CNA: College of the North Atlantic, the public college in Newfoundland and Labrador
- HRDC/HRCC: Human Resources Development Canada, Government of Canada. The regional offices are sometimes referred to as HRCC
- HRE: Human Resources and Employment, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
- LMDA: Labour Market Development Agreement
- MN: Métis Nation. This group administers many programs on behalf of the Métis people in Labrador. They were one of the funding agents for Bridging the Gap in Port Hope Simpson.

- PC: Project Co-ordinator. The individual hired by the project sponsor to co-ordinate the implementation of each Bridging the Gap site.
- PI: Practical Instructor. The practical instructor supervises all of the practical components of Bridging the Gap on-site activities. S/he ensures clients understand and learn the process and expected standards of activity and conduct of the workplace. S/he is an employee of the employment partner.
- RNDA: Random North Development Association
- SSP: Strategic Social Plan. This is a provincial government plan to develop the province socially and stresses collaboration, inclusion and self-reliance. More information on the SSP can be found at <http://www.gov.nl.ca/ssp/>
- TWS: Targeted Wage Subsidy. This is a program subsidizing employment costs. Most of the employment partners benefitted from this program when the clients were finished Bridging the Gap and ready to start work. See <http://www.hrdc.gc.ca/hrib/sdd-dds/odi/content/TWS.shtml> for further info on the program.

Nine Links of the Bridging the Gap Model

The Nine Links of the Bridging the Gap Model include:

1. Finding the Right Business Option/Basic Skills and Knowledge Requirements

2. Making the Model Work

Administration, Proposals, Bookkeeping

3. Form a Community Learning Network (CLN)

This team includes representation from all levels of the community. (For example: community-based organizations, education providers, partnering company, union if applicable, local federal and provincial government departments, and community development organizations. The main role of the CLN is to implement each link of the model.

4. Participants

Who are the participants?

- Individuals having limited employment opportunities (unemployed/underemployed)
- No high school completion, ABE, or GED Certificate
- Mobility-wanting to stay and work in own community/province

To assist in identifying participants consult with:

- Human Resource Development Canada
- Employment Services (H.R.D.C.)
- Department of Human Resources and Employment
- Ability Employment Corporation Organizations

5. Information Sharing Session

This is the initial screening process to identify who will participate in the skills development component. The Information Sharing Session would provide an overview of the model, the funding criteria, a brief description of the skills development component, and the job duties as they relate to the skill sets of the partnering company.

6. Assessment and Selection Process

Thorough Psycho-Educational Assessments would be conducted on applicants screened from the Information Sharing Session. A subcommittee from the CLN would consult and decide on the most suitable applicants based on the needs of the model and the partnering company.

7. Design and Adjust the Skills Development Component

An accredited Educational provider (Post-Secondary School) with the Department of Education would work with the CLN to design and deliver the academic/workplace skills enhancement component based around the needs of the training participants and partnering company.

8. Academic/Workplace Skills Enhancement (Delivery)

Detailed skill set enhancement related to industry. Participants would receive a combination of classroom time and technical/practical skill set development. All academic components are linked to the employment site.

9. Ongoing/Final Evaluation

Evaluation is an important component of the model and helps determine the effectiveness of your project.