

Building Foundations for Canadians in Transition

FINAL REPORT



INDEPENDENT LIVING ACCOUNT PROJECT



RYERSON UNIVERSITY

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July 2006

By:



And

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Individuals and families who are living in transitional or supportive housing situations lack a security of tenure and may have extreme housing affordability problems. As a result, they are also faced with potential problems associated with being able to operate and live within the private rental market.

Current evidence suggests that homelessness is moving away from an episodic/periodic situation to a continuing state of affairs for many people. Transition back into the “mainstream” society is, therefore, becoming increasingly difficult for many.¹ The need to respond to this evolving set of circumstances has resulted in community-based agencies, and Funders of those agencies, reaching deeper into the community for help. This has included the formation of more diverse linkages, strategic partnerships and alliances with other related agencies and service providers.

The approach proposed through the Independent Living Account (ILA) Project provided an opportunity for individuals and families living within transitional housing facilities to create a foundation on which to build personal savings towards specific goals, such as first and last months rent or damage deposits, utility hook-ups, apartment insurance, and moving expenses, while, at the same time, receiving life-skill training that could buttress them from future poverty or provide them with the means necessary to break out of the cycle of poverty. Ultimately, the goal of the ILA Project was to increase the self-sufficiency of those living within transitional or supportive housing thereby allowing them to move with confidence into more appropriate and affordable housing.

The broad research goal of the ILA demonstration was to measure the impacts of providing persons living within transitional housing facilities with a mix of financial and training incentives as a means of facilitating their entry into the mainstream housing and rental markets. In terms of research, this project was designed to test the effectiveness of the combined effect of matched financial incentives, financial capability training and intensive community-based case management for 129 persons living in transitional housing.

METHODOLOGY

Case study methodology was utilized for this project to evaluate the effectiveness of the ILA Project in the three chosen cities of Edmonton, Toronto, and Fredericton. Each site was examined independently to evaluate the performance of the project while, at the same time, being controlled for contextual factors (agency administration, governance, staffing, etc.) in order to ensure the project operated in similar environments.

Edmonton, whose project began before the ILA project, had a different Funder and was specifically geared towards rental damage deposits, collected different data and incorporated different enrollment criteria for its participants. Therefore Edmonton was treated as a

¹ Carter, Tom; 2001 National Research Conference: Bringing Communities Together, A Community Based Approach to Addressing Homelessness. *Community Challenges and Governance Issues: an Overview*. Ottawa, December 7, 2001.

separate case study. It was determined that 34 of the 69 original participants (49 per cent) did not qualify under the ILA Project criteria. Due to the incompatibility of resulting data, the Edmonton project data is therefore not included in this report's quantitative analysis.

For the Toronto and Fredericton sites, quantitative data was also collected using a Management Information System (MIS) capturing a variety of participant data, including: savings behaviour, participation in the Financial Capability Training (FCT), goal achievement and cash-out details, etc. Qualitative focus group and key informant information was also collected to assess opinions, attitudes and responses to the ILA project as a whole and to assist in identifying what project elements were considered most useful and what changes could be warranted from the respondents' perspectives.

The objectives of this research were ultimately to:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of the ILA Project as a method of assisting the poor and working poor to accumulate assets sufficient to finance accommodation;
- Test the applicability of matched financial incentives, financial literacy, and strong community administered case management for persons living within transitional housing who have a desire to move into the private rental market;
- Examine the efficacy of using ILAs for individuals and families living within transitional housing;
- Gather better information about the necessary components a successful ILA project should include.

The participant and staff experiences at the three locations were evaluated through quantitative methods including a series of descriptive statistics as well as a cross-table analysis. The qualitative element in the analysis used content analysis in order to evaluate the common themes and issues that arose during focus group sessions. This case study approach permitted researchers to examine the unique program attributes associated with each site, while the use of a consistent set of methods allowed for comparative analysis among sites. Each case study began with a context analysis of the key local attributes influencing the implementation of the ILA Project including a review of housing market conditions, demographic characteristics of the populations most in need of social service supports, and a summary of service provider capacity and priorities.

Although the evaluation was ultimately designed to make judgments about the outcomes of the pilot project, the evaluation was also improvement focused. The project's research goal, in this case, was to provide better information about the critical components a successful ILA project should include and ultimately to inform policy makers and housing providers/administrators with valuable, cost effective results. It was hoped that these results would be scaleable (flexible and practicable so that they could be applied across the country in urban, rural, large, and small communities) in order to assist all Canadians who find themselves living under similar circumstances. In addition, the research aimed to show that, if successful, this pilot could substantiate governments and communities investing in this tool to fight homelessness.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Although the sample utilized for this project is relatively small, the richness of the information and the consistency of the patterns produced through the research provide both robust and credible results. In fact, there is enough evidence from this project to create a functional template for viable ILA implementation in most urban and rural locations across the country

Powerful evidence of the viability of the conceptual model consisting of the immediate element (joining the ILA), the intermediate element (FCT and successful saving), and the ultimate level (successful reintegration into the housing market) is offered by that group of participants who continued to save past the point that their contributions would be matched.

Perhaps the most relevant research question relating to this project's research outcomes is:

Can an ILA project or its individual components provide the necessary incentives and supports to allow those living within transitional housing facilities to gain the tools and practical necessities to allow for their transition into a more self-sufficient lifestyle within market that supply affordable and more appropriate housing?

The project research and evidence presented from the quantitative study indicates a positive YES to this question. The conclusions from this research are as follows:

1. Those living under financially constrained circumstance CAN and DO save when presented with the right incentives and supports.

The components of this project provided financial incentives to participants at a rate of 2:1 and 3:1 in both the Toronto and Fredericton sites. These incentives and subsequent participation in the project resulted in the following:

- 129 participants were enrolled in the project voluntarily;
- 100 participants opened bank accounts. All of these participants had very low incomes and extremely low asset accumulation;
- 44 per cent of the enrolled participants successfully cashed-out of the project and moved into a more self-sufficient lifestyle and into appropriate and affordable housing;
- If one considers that out of the participants enrolled in the Toronto and Fredericton sites, 100 savings accounts were opened then the percentage of successful savers jumps to 57 per cent;
- Participants who opened bank accounts, collectively saved over \$33,000 and leveraged almost \$79,000 in matched contributions;
- Participants generally saved beyond what was required for the project commitment and became reintegrated into the financial services mainstream;

- This project successfully encouraged persons in transitional housing to change their savings behaviour. This project allowed for personal savings and a matched incentive to allow a less stressful re-entry into the private housing market; and
- This project successfully taught participants the benefits of a systematic approach to saving.

2. An ILA project is more likely to be successful when the community partner agency is a transitional housing provider.

This conclusion is strengthened by the results of the ILA case comparison. In Toronto, where project results were comparably better, the four agencies administering the project were transitional housing providers and project conclusions illustrate that this model worked very well and benefited ILA participants greatly. In Fredericton and Edmonton the agencies were not direct housing service providers. However, in Fredericton, the YMCA was able to compensate by utilizing a range of methods that, while administratively cumbersome, did achieve benefits for participants.

The ILA model undertaken in Edmonton was dependent on an organized cluster of supports entirely external to the project and proved much less successful.

3. The matched savings component is central to the marketing of the ILA and is a key feature to assisting with savings towards first and last months rent.

The majority of participants were drawn to this project by the offering of the matched incentive and a strong interest in learning why and how to save for future goals. The matched credits provided a strong incentive to do so and a practical solution to the hurdle of accumulating first and last months rent or damage deposits. Consistent messaging by the case managers however was required. The fact that participants took responsibility for opening their own accounts added to the outcomes of self-sufficiency and confidence.

4. The Facilitator's method of presenting the Financial Capability Training contributes to the success of a participant within this project.

Personal attention to the individual needs of participants has an impact on interest and ultimate success in the project. Good facilitators and case managers can make a difference in project success.

5. The ILA must incorporate a flexible savings period and cash-out time frame that is aligned with the needs and life circumstances of project participants.

A rigid deadline does not always coincide with the participant preparedness to look for market rental housing. Individuals recovering from substance abuse and domestic violence may require longer stays in transitional housing before they are ready to live on their own

6. ILA project partnerships are a significant variable in assisting with the successes of participants.

This project was successful due, in large part, to the nature of the relationships between project partners and their dedication to communicate with prospective ILA participants prior to project design and once the project was underway

7. Additional information may be required to fully assess the efficacy of this approach.

Unfortunately no funding was available for follow-up research with successful ILA participants who cashed-out, moved into more appropriate housing and started their journey to self-sufficiency. It will be important to identify the sustainability or the longer-term impacts of the ILA components on participants especially in relation to recidivism (returning to transitional housing), their savings behaviour and their economic and social circumstances. This longer-term research could answer questions pertaining to the cycle of poverty and why individuals and families return to shelters for housing support.

WHAT THIS COULD MEAN FOR POLICY AND PROGRAMMING

Considering the result of this project and the prospect of follow-up research pertaining to the ILA participants, the components of the ILA may be most suitable to be incorporated into a toolbox of supports that could be offered by Shelters to their residents across the country.

Through the research conducted under this study, the evidence shows that the ILA supports do not exist today, in a comprehensive manner, throughout government funded or privately funded transitional housing facilities. Those living within transitional housing facilities would benefit greatly from these supports. This research does indicate that as a successful pilot, the ILA is a tool that governments and communities should invest in to fight homelessness.

For effective implementation however, funding and technical support for training of trainers, curriculum development, financial institutional links, best practice information and general communications would need to be provided for programmatic start-up. However once capacity is built from the ground level, the initial investment can pay off substantially for years to come and for the benefit of many participants in the program. The return on investment could be substantial and can only be truly understood if a dollar value could be calculated for the benefits arising from an individual's self-sufficiency.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The design, implementation, completion and evaluation of the ILA Project could not have been undertaken without the collective effort of many committed individuals from all sectors in each of the three communities where this project operated.

SEDI is grateful to the Community Partners who not only supported the design and implementation of this project but also provided valuable information to support the research findings contained within this report. These partners include the staff at the Toronto Fort York Residence, Eva's Phoenix, St. Clare's Residence and Amelie House as well as the Fredericton YMCA and the Edmonton Community Loan Fund. Special thanks goes to Tony Dennis, Maria Tiltins, Austen Egiebor, Viresh Raghubeer, Boris Roslak, Rosalind Tierney, Morag Perkins, Clovis Grant, Ashley Hwang, Eyitayo Dada, and Patricia Olawuyi, Jenn Carpenter at the Fredericton YMCA, and Nigel Kidd at the Edmonton Community Loan Fund. In addition, staff at TD Canada Trust (namely the branches at Liberty and Strachan, Queen and Euclid, Logan and Queen and Bayview and Cummer Branches), the York Credit Union in Fredericton, and the Edmonton Community Loan Fund in Edmonton provided valuable support to the project participants. We also thank staff at the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services and at the New Brunswick Department of Family and Community Services who provided accommodation for Social Assistance recipients to participate in this project.

Thanks also to project Funders who represent multi-sectoral stakeholders interested in operationalizing practical solutions to the issues surrounding homelessness. For their role and support, SEDI is grateful to the City of Toronto's Shelter and Housing Support Division, City of Fredericton, the Edmonton Housing Trust Fund, TD Canada Trust, the Toronto Rotary Club, and the New Brunswick Building and Trades Union.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. INDEPENDENT LIVING ACCOUNTS FOR PEOPLE IN TRANSITIONAL SHELTERS

In Canada, homelessness services traditionally have been designed to follow the “continuum of care” model that involves three types of housing supports, namely emergency shelters, transitional housing, and permanent housing. The continuum model requires that participants move through the different levels of support in an attempt to reintegrate the homeless, or at risk, population into more mainstream rental markets. As defined by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation², transitional housing is an intermediate step between emergency crisis shelter and permanent housing. It is more long-term, service-intensive, and private than emergency shelters, yet remains time-limited to stays ranging from three months to three years. It is meant to provide a safe, supportive environment where residents can overcome trauma, begin to address the issues that lead to homelessness or kept them homeless, and begin to rebuild their network of support.

These supports can be effective but they are usually limited by the amount of time that the individual can stay in their respective transitional houses. Often, once individuals leave these facilities, they must fend for themselves financially in the housing market. Therefore, it can be argued that, in order to help participants reintegrate into mainstream society, transitional housing is best coupled with supportive permanent housing and community support services. While this is the most desirable scenario, the reality of scarce affordable supportive units and a shortage of funds for post exit supports make this a difficult task and requires many people in transitional housing to enter and struggle in the private rental market.

While much work and effort in the area of labour market skills development and personal support for people living in transitional housing occurs, little work has gone into those financial challenges associated with moving out of transitional houses and into the private rental market. Many people in transitional housing are re-entering the labour market but they are often working in low paying jobs and without any assets. They are also often without a substantive earnings history, have credit problems, and lack a substantive housing history. Coupled with the fact that the income of the poor and working poor is not keeping pace with the costs required to finance affordable housing across the country, these multiple barriers often make the transition out of transitional housing difficult and may increase the likelihood of individuals remaining improperly housed or returning to the emergency shelter system.

1.2. SEDI'S INVOLVEMENT

In 2002, SEDI (Social and Enterprise Development Innovations)³ began investigating the feasibility of a pilot project that would utilize a mix of financial incentives, financial

² CMHC Research Highlights, Socio-Economic Series 04-017, *Transitional Housing, Objectives, Indicators of Success and Outcomes*.

³ SEDI is a Toronto-based, national non-profit, charitable organization with over six years of experience in the design, research and development of asset-building initiatives specifically for low-income Canadians. For more information see: www.sedi.org

capability education, and case management to increase the self-sufficiency of people living in transitional housing. The resulting Independent Living Account (ILA) Project was derived from existing asset-building methodologies and based on the fact that evidence from current and past asset-building projects in both Canada and abroad have illustrated that individuals with low-incomes can and do save and are able to achieve identified goals when provided with the right mix of financial incentives and longer-term tools/skills.

The ILA model was designed with critical input from front-line transitional housing facility staff and potential participants.⁴ Pre-project consultations undertaken by SEDI clearly identified that potential participants recognized the importance of saving and the effect it could have on their future and that of their families. One of the most significant consultation findings was the positive response to the financial capability training and personal financial management. In addition, there was a recognition that additional supports were also needed for the following: opening of bank accounts; assistance with credit and debt repair; referrals to credit, debt and investment counselors; referrals to housing providers; and connections to peer supports to act as either dual signatories on restrictive saving accounts or strictly for moral support. Perhaps most importantly, however, the consultations clearly recognized that participants wanted to have an active role as contributor to their own future self-sufficiency rather than just being the recipient of a handout.

As a result of this research, SEDI was commissioned in late 2004 by the National Secretariat on Homelessness to operationalize a small-scale pilot research project to test whether such asset-based approaches could assist individuals to move from a transitional housing situation into more affordable and appropriate rental accommodation.

This project sought to determine the effectiveness and applicability of the matched savings incentives and financial capability education components within these environments and to test the efficacy of using the ILA for individuals and families living within transitional housing facilities in these locales. This test, and the resulting project research, was aimed at ultimately being able to determine if such a project could be “rolled-out” on a wider scale nationally and, if so, what components were successful and could be beneficial to those living within a transitional housing situation looking to move to a more self-sufficient lifestyle.

1.3. PROJECT COMPONENTS

The ILA demonstration project had several important components that were designed to operate and be evaluated separately but were not designed to be mutually exclusive. The project components operated in a comprehensive package and were dependant upon each other in order to operate effectively as parts of a whole. The main project components were: participant enrollment, participant savings, mandatory financial capability training, and case management.

⁴ 39 potential participants were interviewed and over half were living within a transitional housing situation. The balance of participants were interviewed as they were screened for low-income and provided that they were at risk of moving to transitional housing due to their personal economic circumstances. **All** participants interviewed identified the importance and usefulness of a mandatory financial capability ILA component.

Participant Enrollment

The project was open to persons who were either living in a transitional housing situation or who were at risk of losing their current rental housing.⁵ Community Partners screened participants in Toronto and Fredericton through an application process. In Fredericton, a checklist for applicants living within social/subsidized housing was also required in addition to the standard application form, which initially didn't include information pertaining to this living situation. These forms allowed Community Partners to collect sufficient information to determine eligibility for the ILA Project. In Edmonton, the Edmonton Community Loan Fund (ECLF) opted to utilize their own enrollment procedures that unfortunately resulted in issues for the ILA researchers who could not verify eligibility for the project. (*See Section 2.5 for more detail and the results of this action on project outcomes.*)

All eligible applications were processed on a first-come-first-served basis. In all cases, Community Partners had to be satisfied that the applicant met the eligibility criteria. Project staff requested reasonable additional information to clarify any questionable or missing information on an application. In all cases, Community Partners were accountable for the decisions they made regarding applications.

In Toronto and Fredericton, applications were evaluated for eligibility on the following criteria:

- *Valid Social Insurance Number*
- *Income* - Family income, rather than individual income, was the basis for determining eligibility for the ILA Project. For the ILA Project, family refers to the economic family, as defined by Statistics Canada;⁶ the economic family was defined at the time of the application. The threshold for family income was equivalent to 110 per cent of the Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut-Off (LICO) values (see Appendix 1 for the complete list of income sources).

Applications from persons living in families of two or more were only accepted if the total income of all adults (aged 18 and over) was at or below the applicable threshold, based on family size and area of residence. Applications from persons living alone were only accepted if the applicant's income was at or below the applicable threshold for singles, based on area of residence.

⁵ The enrolment protocol at the Fredericton site was amended to accommodate an expanded definition of eligible participants in order to allow those living within subsidized housing to enroll. This change served the original intent of the ILA project, to aid low-income individuals and families to secure and sustain appropriate rental accommodations, however, by assisting this group to obtain longer-term, market housing. We would also enable those on the waiting lists to finally access subsidized housing. Section 2 of this paper provides additional details on this amendment.

⁶ An economic family is a group of two or more persons who live in the same dwelling and are related to each other by blood, marriage, common-law or adoption.

If an applicant reported \$0 in income for themselves or their spouse, community partners were expected to satisfy themselves that this is a true reporting of the applicant's situation.

- *Assets* - Asset screening was based on the self-reported information of applicants with no documentation required. Community Partners had the discretion to request additional information from applicants if they had reason to suspect the self-reported information is inaccurate. Additional information was required to be placed in the applicant's file to justify the decision made and to assist when spot checks were undertaken. For a list of applicable liquid assets please see Appendix 1.

Participant Savings

Participants had the opportunity to open a savings account at a local financial institution. Participants who could not open an account or had trouble doing so because of issues with credit rating, debt and identification, received assistance from their case manager.

All deposits were recorded in the individual participant's bankbook. In Toronto and Fredericton, the participant would identify the banking activity to the case manager who, in turn would enter the required banking activity into the MIS system. This data was checked regularly against bank records for accuracy and the MIS system itself, due to its design, reduced data entry and matched credit calculations mistakes from being made.

Participant savings were matched by the Funder up to pre-established limits within a specified time frame, on the condition that all project protocols were met by the participant and that the money would be used for approved purposes of first and last months rent, damage deposits, moving expenses, content insurance, and/or utility hook-up charges. The matched savings were allocated as a monthly virtual credit on each participant's bank statement. These matched credits were provided directly to the vendor (i.e. landlord) together with the personal contribution of the participant.

Mandatory Financial Capability Training

In addition to the matched contribution, the community-based agency facilitated the delivery of a mandatory financial capability training course.⁷ The course provided the participants with information and personalized training on subjects pertaining to basic banking, budgeting, credit and debt repair and management, and saving and spending strategies including consumerism. It also included elements designed to promote positive self-esteem, goal setting, and achievement.

⁷ SEDI had developed the curriculum for use in the Toronto site with input from Front-Line shelter staff. SEDI also provided facilitation training to front line staff in the Toronto site. Fredericton and Edmonton used their own curriculum and trainers.

Case Management

The community agency staff also served as case managers, answering questions about the program, providing encouragement to participants and supporting their progression in the project. In addition, the case managers also recorded data in the MIS system and provided valuable information to researchers on the project elements.

1.4. THE PROJECT PARTNERS

Project Administrator

The ILA Project was conceptualized, designed, and administered by SEDI. As the lead project partner, SEDI's responsibilities included liaising with project partners to ensure that the project design addressed the specific housing needs of those participants moving out of transitional housing, designing and implementing project protocols (enrollment screening criteria and tools, savings amounts and savings periods, cash-out criteria and process, etc.), creating an Operations Manual to guide the project operations and research design, developing the financial capability curriculum and training of trainers session for the Toronto site, training case managers in project operations, approving and administering the matched contributions (in Toronto and Fredericton), creating a Management Information System (MIS) to capture participant data for research purposes, and managing the project research.

Community Partners

In order to ensure participant access and local service delivery, the ILA Project required SEDI to partner with a variety of community-based agencies committed to serving the transitional housing population in the cities of Fredericton, Toronto and Edmonton. The partnering agencies, namely Fort York Residences, Eva's Phoenix, Amelie House and St. Clare's Residence in Toronto, the Fredericton YMCA, and the Edmonton Community Loan Fund, were responsible for recruiting clients, providing case management, delivering financial capability training, assisting with the banking processes, and administering the matched contribution process.⁸ In Edmonton, the site chose not to use the SEDI Management Information System (MIS) or to follow SEDI recruitment and project protocols closely. For the purposes of this research project, the Edmonton site is therefore treated as a case study in this final report. Further discussion of this situation is found within various sections of this report.

In recognition of the variety of community needs represented in each of the three project sites chosen, it should be noted that project variations were undertaken at each site. These variations were implemented mainly to reflect local circumstances, including funding amounts, expected costs for cash-out goals (first and last months rent, damage deposits, etc.), and expectations for required financial literacy. These variations included: differing match rates – Toronto and Edmonton proposed a 3:1 match while Fredericton utilized a 2:1 match; various maximum personal savings amounts; different minimum monthly savings

⁸ Please see Appendix 3 for a brief description of each community partner.

amounts; and the required amount of mandatory financial capability. For a complete summary of these variations please see Appendix 2.

Researchers

Ryerson University was retained to undertake the project research and, as such, participated in selecting the appropriate research methodology, undertaking the project research, and preparing and presenting the research findings in this report.

Ryerson University, specifically the Faculty of Community Services within the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, were chosen as the Researchers for this project due to their established history of research and knowledge into the area of housing and homelessness on many levels. The professors in this department have also undertaken extensive research through the profiling of persons at risk of losing their housing situation and requiring services or support while in a homeless, transitional housing or at risk situation.

Funding Partners

In an effort to ensure that components of this project were properly funded, SEDI undertook the project's fund development responsibilities and were pleased with the receptiveness from TD Canada Trust, the Toronto Rotary Club, and the City of Toronto, all of which provided funding support to the project. In addition, the Fredericton YMCA was successful in obtaining funding from the City of Fredericton and the New Brunswick Building and Trades Union. The Edmonton Housing Trust Fund funded the Edmonton Community Loan Fund to undertake work related to this project.

Under a request from SEDI, the Provinces of Ontario and New Brunswick granted approval for Social Assistance Recipients to participate in the project without having any benefits compromised. The site staff in Edmonton chose not to go to the Province of Alberta for similar approval.

The National Secretariat on Homelessness under the National Homelessness Initiative provided funding for the research component of this project.

Financial Institutions

The participating financial institutions included TD Canada Trust in Toronto, the York Credit Union in Fredericton, and the Edmonton Community Loan Fund in Edmonton. These institutions not only housed the ILA accounts for participants but also provided staff that was available to:

- Provide savings account services (account opening, deposit and withdrawal transactions, regular account statements to community partners);
- Provide account monitoring (providing monthly account transaction information to the Community Partners);
- Provide project information and training to branch staff about the project and their respective roles; and
- Participate in the provision of financial capability training.

1.5. THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Overview

The broad research goal of the ILA Project was to measure the impacts of providing persons living within transitional housing facilities with a mix of financial and training incentives as a means of facilitating their entry into the mainstream housing and rental markets. In terms of research, this project was designed to test the effectiveness of the matched financial incentives, financial capability, and strong community administered case management for this target market. More specifically, the objectives of the related project research were to:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of the ILA Project as a method of assisting the poor and working poor to accumulate assets sufficient enough to finance appropriate and affordable accommodation;
- Test the applicability of matched financial incentives, financial capability, and strong community administered case management for persons living within transitional housing who have a desire to move into the rental market;
- Examine the efficacy of using ILAs for individuals and families living within transitional housing; and
- Gather better information related to the necessary components a successful ILA project.

Although the evaluation was ultimately designed to make judgments about the outcomes of the pilot project, the evaluation was also improvement focused. The project's research goal in this case was to provide better information about the critical components a successful ILA Project should include and, ultimately, to inform policy makers and housing providers and administrators with valuable, cost-effective results. It was hoped that these results would be scaleable – flexible and practicable so that they could be applied across the country in urban, rural, large, and small communities – in order to assist all Canadians who may find themselves living under similar circumstances. In addition, the research aimed to show that, if successful, this pilot could substantiate governments and communities investing in this tool to fight homelessness.

It is important to note here that the researchers at Ryerson have extensive experience interviewing individuals and working with sensitive data sets. All focus group protocols, the exit interview template, and the funding partners' survey were submitted to the Ryerson Ethics Review Board for approval. Analysis and the reporting of the results were also in line with the principles of confidentiality and anonymity. This demonstration project also complied with the National Homelessness Initiative's Ethical Guidelines for Conducting Research involving Homeless People.

Methodology

Case study methodology was utilized for this project to evaluate the effectiveness of the ILA Project in the three chosen cities of Edmonton, Toronto, and Fredericton. Each site was examined independently to evaluate the performance of the project while controlling for contextual factors. In addition to using a case study approach, quantitative data was also collected using a Management Information System (MIS) designed by SEDI.

In terms of the evaluation of the impacts of the ILA Project, the following information was gathered and analyzed:

- Data compiled from the application forms that were voluntarily completed by every participant;
- Participant savings data (deposits and withdrawals) as collected by the community partners, inputted into the project MIS and up-loaded to SEDI regularly for analysis;
- Case management notes entered into the MIS files of participants;
- Information collected from focus groups at each participating agency; and
- Key informant interviews with agency personnel responsible for direct administration of the project and with representatives at the participating banks who had most involvement with the ILA Project;

In selecting an evaluative method for this study, the utilization-focused approach⁹ was used. According to this approach, three levels of goals were specified:

- i. *Immediate-level outcome goals* which relate directly to program implementation and participation (for example the decision to participate in the ILA);
- ii. *Intermediate-level outcome goals* that relate to specific accomplishments or changes expected from participating in a program (for example savings histories, cash out success, goal attainment); and
- iii. *Ultimate-level outcomes* that refer to the broader or longer-term changes in development or life behaviors that are expected from program participation (as exemplified by the long term benefits of proper budgeting and spending decisions that facilitate the maintenance of stable housing).

According to the hierarchy, accomplishing an immediate-level outcome goal is necessary to accomplish intermediate-level goals, which in turn are required to accomplish ultimate-level goals. In this way, a causal chain of program effects is formed and thus can be analyzed through the use of both qualitative and quantitative data.

⁹ Please see Patton, M. (1997). Utilization-focused evaluation: The New Century Text (pp. 301-338). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

As mentioned above, a combination of qualitative and quantitative data was used for this evaluation. The qualitative focus group and key informant information was aimed at assessing opinions, attitudes and responses to the ILA as a whole and also at identifying, for each element of the causal chain, what elements were considered most useful and what changes were warranted from the respondents' perspectives. The quantitative data included information pertinent to the evaluation of participant saving behaviors and program operations such as saving periods, savings amounts and cash-outs in the project.

Relative changes in a participant's economic and housing situation also served as important indicators of overall project impact on the participants. This data was summarized using basic descriptive statistics and cross-tables involving pairs of variables to highlight particular factors influencing the success of the project. After each site was evaluated independently, a comparative analysis sought to integrate these experiences into an overall project evaluation. This research served to also identify the common themes and differences that emerged in the individual case analyses.

Literature Review

For the reader's information, a brief literature has been included in Appendix 4 to provide more in-depth background and context to the research that was undertaken for this project in the areas of asset-building, transitional housing, and financial capability.

2. METHODOLOGY

The project researchers and SEDI ensured that the research methodology was created with enough flexibility to recognize individual participant attitudes and experiences, the individual site characteristics, and their unique operating environments, while at the same time allowing for the programmatic components to generate the required data and to ensure proper project analysis. Therefore, both qualitative and quantitative research methods were employed in this study.

It is important to note that the Edmonton site administrator, the ECLF, opted out of the SEDI data collection process and, as a result, did not assemble a dataset with comparable variables. Due to major variations at the Edmonton, the site was treated as separate case in the ILA study. The following section provides more detail on this.

2.1. DATA COLLECTION

The research data was obtained through research methods that focused on four populations, namely: the partner agencies and their programmatic operations; the participating agency employees who administered the ILA Project; the transitional housing residents who participated in the ILA Project; and the representatives of the financial institutions who had direct contact with ILA participants during the bank account opening and regular banking processes.

The research methods used included: Case Study Comparison, Key Informant Interviews, Focus Group Discussions, and Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis. The data was summarized using basic descriptive statistics and cross-tables involving pairs of variables to highlight particular factors influencing the success of the project. These methods and their applicability to this study will be examined further in this section.

Case Study

It is widely accepted that a case study methodology is not intended, nor able, to provide statistically generalizable results. Rather, it is employed to answer the "how" or "why" questions about a contemporary phenomenon in a real-life context which is not controlled by the researcher.¹⁰ The goal of case studies is to expand and generalize theories rather than produce the statistical results that can be obtained through surveys and experiments. A similar view¹¹ holds that generalizations can be modified by case studies, since they can provide a particularly close examination of a phenomenon.

Through initial discussion with the site partners SEDI and the researchers have strived to achieve a balance between allowing site partners to capitalize on their strengths and expertise in the local environment, while staying reasonably close to a project model designed and conceptualized by SEDI. This approach also allowed site-specific references and evaluation

¹⁰ Please see Yin, R. (1994); *Case study research: Design and methods* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

¹¹ Please see Stake, R. (1995); *The Art of Case Research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

to be undertaken in order to test the effectiveness of the project within the different geographical and socio-economic locations.

The three project cities varied on many dimensions including the types of service agency structure and governance, staffing, geography, social and cultural content, provincial political environment, and local economic conditions. Therefore a comparative analysis was chosen to allow for comparisons of the site-specific implementation experiences to be undertaken.

Key Informant Interviews

The researchers opted to use key informant interviews with staff at the participating delivery agencies and the employees of the financial institutions used in this project to better understand the various organizational mandates, the socio-demographic profile of the typical client base, the services provided to clients in general, as well as the various perspectives on the impact of the ILA on participants, the identification of best practices, and any suggestions for improvement.

Researchers completed three-structured one-on-one key informant interviews in Fredericton, six in Toronto, and three in Edmonton for a total of 12 key informant interviews.

To maintain a consistent approach to these interviews, a key informant protocol was developed by Ryerson. A copy of this protocol can be viewed under Appendix 5.

Focus Groups

The researchers used focus group discussions to draw upon respondents' attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences, and reactions in a way which would not be feasible using other methods such as observation, one-to-one interviewing, or questionnaire surveys. These attitudes, feelings and beliefs may be partially independent of a group or its social setting but were thought to be revealed more easily via the social gathering and the interaction which being in a focus group entails. Compared to individual interviews, which aim to obtain individual attitudes, beliefs and feelings, focus groups elicit a multiplicity of views and emotional processes within a group context.

Focus groups were used as an interviewing method with ILA participants in order to extract information related to their reasons for participating in the pilot and their assessment of the impact of ILA.

Participant response and reflection was accessed using a focus group method. Appendix 6 includes the Focus Group Protocol developed to ensure a consistent approach to this undertaking. Volunteers were canvassed at each agency and focus groups of six to 10 participants were formed. All conditions for ensuring ethical conduct of research on humans were met including the attainment of an Ethics Approval Certificate and each focus group participant received an honorarium of forty dollars.

Four focus groups were held in Toronto (one at each participating agency), two in Edmonton and one in Fredericton, resulting in seven focus groups each lasting about 70 to 90 minutes. These group sessions were audio taped, transcribed, analyzed, and validated

manually by reviewing the audiotape and written notes of the researcher and examining the transcriptions. Finally, as described earlier, after each site was evaluated independently, a comparative analysis sought to integrate these experiences into an overall ILA Project evaluation. This portion of the evaluation identified the common themes and differences that emerged in the individual case studies.

Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis

In addition to the qualitative data described above, quantitative socio-demographic data on participants, their savings, and their recruitment and retention histories were collected by each agency and uploaded to SEDI's Management Information System (MIS) in Fredericton and Toronto. The Edmonton Community Loan Fund (ECLF) did not collect similar participant income and demographic data and had different intake criteria. As an independent operator with a funding source not directly linked to the ILA Project, the ECLF had little obligation to operate the project in accordance with the ILA parameters. Due to these factors, a direct comparison cannot be made between Edmonton and the other project sites. The experience gained from the Edmonton site has been identified in a case study that is discussed in more detail more detail in Sections 2.2 and 2.5.

Researchers used the baseline data gained through participant application forms (a mandatory requirement for enrollment screening) as the context for evaluating the ILA Project. Relative changes in a participant's economic and housing situation served as important indicators of overall project impacts on participants. Unfortunately due to the fact that researchers could not verify the validity of the baseline data received from the Edmonton as different information was collected on the application form, no comparison could reasonably be made between this site and the Toronto and Fredericton sites.

Each partner agency was responsible for collecting data, beginning with the application and continuing through an individual's participation in the ILA Project. Baseline socio-demographic data, along with recruitment, retention and savings histories, were collected by each partner agency that was then responsible for uploading the information on a regular basis to a central MIS system maintained by SEDI staff. All personal identifiers, including names and social insurance numbers were suppressed by SEDI in order to respect participant confidentiality. Participants gave their personal data and researchers were granted approval by participants to use this information by the means of a formal informed consent signed by each participant in the project.

Participant data collected during on the project application included:

- Gender
- Date of Birth
- Cultural Background
- Language most commonly spoken
- Citizenship
- Newcomer Status (arrived in Canada in the last 2 years)
- Immigration Status
- Employment Status

- Marital Status
- Disability Status
- Recent Experience with Substance Abuse
- Highest Level of Education
- Income—Individual and Family (where applicable)
- Asset Information
- Current living Arrangement and Length of Time there

As noted earlier, all project statistics in the Toronto and Fredericton sites were collected and analyzed using the SEDI project MIS. Since data collection and tracking are such critical components for this pilot project, SEDI worked hard to develop a project-specific management information system (MIS) that was designed to accurately track participant project data. This information includes all data related to project participation in all aspects of the program, included financial capability training, bank deposits, matched credits earned and cash outs for matched credits. SEDI staff also trained site staff partners in the use of the MIS to ensure efficient and accurate tracking of the data. As well, all calculations of matched credits are automated.

Using the MIS in Fredericton and Toronto, the following data was tracked using the MIS and recorded:

- Financial capability training hours
- Savings behaviour
- Savings amounts
- Cash outs for matched funds
- Case management information

The quantitative data portion of this analysis identifies key demographic characteristics of participants. It also provides an overview of the project participation and the participant savings. The analysis then seeks to discern patterns of association between demographic characteristics, levels of participation, savings histories and successful outcomes for the ILA program.

Validity of Data

A variety of techniques were used to collect the data incorporated into the ILA evaluation. The qualitative portion of the analysis included seven focus groups comprised of project participants in Toronto, Fredericton and Edmonton. Through these focus groups the researchers met with a proportion of program participants that exceeded the numbers required to ensure a representative qualitative sample. Consequently, the results contained a rich collection of opinions and experiences. Also, the large number of focus group participants enabled the over weighting of certain demographic factors to ensure that research included a diverse sample.

The second qualitative data collection method involved productive key informant interviews with all ILA administrators. Referrals by SEDI and the participating agency gave the researchers access to those people who were most familiar with the program's

implementation. This process gave the researchers the knowledge necessary to conduct an informed analysis.

SEDI was responsible for maintaining the system used to collect and store all the quantitative data on ILA participants in Toronto and Fredericton. The variables in the dataset were most appropriately analyzed using descriptive statistical summaries. The accuracy of this information relied on the ability of the partner agencies to properly record and submit the information.

In order to maintain the quality of the data regular checks of the site data were made by SEDI. In the event of an abnormality, direct communication with the sites was undertaken immediately. In an attempt to reduce data input mistakes, SEDI designed the system with drop-down menus for easy use and staff training was undertaken and on-line assistance was readily available. In addition, quarterly checks of the MIS system were undertaken by SEDI throughout project operation.

As noted before, the Edmonton site administrator did not collect the same data and, as a result, did not assemble a verifiable dataset with comparable variables. Due to incompatibility of the Edmonton, the site was treated as separate case in the ILA study (see section 2.5 for discussion).

2.2. DATA ANALYSIS

In this section, results are broken down into four components:

- i. *Participant profile*: details the self reported demographic information collected from project participants by site;
- ii. *Participant Savings*: analysis of monthly bank data from project participants;
- iii. *Credits Earned*: analysis of matched funds earned in relation to the participant's savings and generated through MIS calculations of the savings data; and
- iv. *Program Success*: analysis of data generated from cheque requisition (process used to verify participant cash-out information that was kept by the MIS).

Participant Profile

The ILA participants numbered 129 in total from both Fredericton and Toronto. A total of 69 participants were enrolled in Edmonton, however, as noted earlier, due to the fact that a comparable set of data was not obtained from the Edmonton site, a quantitative comparison could not be undertaken for that site. The following discussion and analysis pertains to the Toronto and Fredericton sites predominately. Section 2.5 provides a case comparison of the available Edmonton data.

ILA participants in Toronto and Fredericton formed a diverse group with a composition that was largely determined by the service provider's target client groups. Consequently, participant characteristics are presented according to each transitional housing service provider.

This section provides an overview of data collected on gender, age, highest level of education attained, employment status, visible minority status, disability status and aboriginal status (some numbers have been rounded). It should be noted that all participant information provided on the required project application forms was self-reported and the following data reflects this. One of the participants chose not to report their disability and aboriginal status and two participants did not report their visible minority status.

Participant Numbers by Site

The following pertains to five of the six case study sites - the site in Fredericton and the four transitional facilities in Toronto. This had an effect on the sample because of the gender and age requirements of each transitional house as well as the relative sizes of each house. For example, Fort York residence in Toronto is a male transition house and made up more than half of the Toronto sample while Eva’s Phoenix is a youth residence and Amelie House and St. Clare’s residence are both female transition houses. As well, additional services and programs provided by the sites may have had results on program outcomes

Table No. 1 – Participants by Site

n=129	Amelie House	Eva’s Phoenix	Fort York	St Clare’s	Toronto Total	Fredericton	Total
Total Number	14	31	57	9	111	18	129
% of Sample	11%	24%	44%	7%	86%	14%	100%

Gender

The gender distribution among ILA participants was approximately two-thirds male and one-third female. This breakdown is typical of the gender distribution for homeless persons in most urban areas and the project operations at the four facilities provided a comparable participant group. The data reported below reflects the female-only resident’s composition of Amelie House and St. Clare’s, along with exclusively male clientele served by Fort York. The gender mixed residence, Eva’s Phoenix, and the Fredericton project wound up with a similar male to female presence, 55 male and 45 female.

Table No. 2 – Participant Gender

n=129	Amelie House	Eva’s Phoenix	Fort York	St. Clare’s	Toronto Total	Fredericton	Total
Female	14(100%)	14(45%)	0(0%)	9(100%)	37(33%)	8(44%)	45(35%)
Male	0(0%)	17(55%)	57(100%)	0(0%)	74(67%)	10(56%)	84(65%)
Total Number	14	31	57	9	111	18	129

Age of Participants

Age distributions varied substantially between the ILA agencies. Overall, the 18-25 years cohort had the largest proportional representation at 29 per cent. This was due in large measure due to the fact that Eva's Phoenix caters exclusively to this age category. The participants at Amelie House and Fort York clustered around the 26 to 55 year cohort, while most of the St. Clare's group was 46 years and older. Fredericton also had a slightly older composition, with the 46 to 55 year old group comprising the single largest category of their participants.

Table No. 3 – Age of Participants

n=129	Amelie House	Eva's Phoenix	Fort York	St Clare's	Toronto Total	Fredericton	Total
18-25	1(7%)	31(100%)	3(5%)	0%	35(32%)	2(11%)	37(29%)
26-35	2(14%)	0(0%)	12(21%)	1(11%)	15(14%)	5(28%)	20(16%)
36-45	6(43%)	0(0%)	21(37%)	0%	27(24%)	4(22%)	31(24%)
46-55	2(14%)	0(0%)	17(30%)	6(67%)	25(23%)	7(39%)	32(25%)
56+	3(21%)	0(0%)	4(7%)	2(22%)	9(8%)	0%	9(7%)

Current Year Income

All participants in the program were living on low incomes. The highest average reported income by site was Fort York that had an average current year income of \$11,524.92. This is likely because of an employment requirement in the Fort York Residences. The lowest average income was \$4686.75 gained by a resident at St. Clare's in Toronto. The lowest reported individual annual income was \$400 and the highest was \$25,000.

Table No. 4 – Current Year Income

n=129	Amelie House	Eva's Phoenix	Fort York	St Clare's	Toronto Total	Fredericton	Total
Current Year Income	\$5670.31	\$6068.97	\$11,524.92	\$4686.75	\$8707.78	\$8,131.91	\$8627.89

Education (Highest Level Achieved)

The majority of participants possessed a high school diploma. Over half of the youth participants from Eva's Phoenix had only a K-8 education. St. Clare's had the largest percentage of high school graduates, while 42 per cent of the Amelie House participants successfully completed post-high school programs.

Table No. 5 – Education of Participants

n=129	Amelie House	Eva's Phoenix	Fort York	St. Clare's	Toronto Total	Fredericton	Total
No formal education	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1(6%)	1(1%)
Grade K-8	2(14%)	16(52%)	5(9%)	1(11%)	24(22%)	2(11%)	26(20%)
Some high school	2(14%)	7(23%)	13(23%)	0%	22(20%)	5(28%)	27(21%)
Completed high school	4(29%)	7(23%)	28(49%)	7(78%)	46(41%)	4(22%)	50(40%)
Completed college	2(14%)	0%	1(2%)	0%	3(3%)	2(11%)	5(4%)
Completed trade or vocational school	2(14%)	1(3%)	3(5%)	0%	6(5%)	4(22%)	10(8%)
Completed undergraduate university	2(14%)	0%	7(12%)	0%	9(8%)	0%	9(7%)
Completed graduate studies	0%	0%	0%	1(11%)	1(1%)	0%	1(1%)

Participant Employment Status (at time of application)

Almost half of the Toronto and Fredericton participants were unemployed when they began the ILA Project. Fort York, a male-only facility, had the highest percentage of full-time employees at 46 per cent, while St. Clare's and Amelie House, the female-based service providers, recorded the highest unemployment rates.

Table No. 6 – Participant Employment Status

n=129	Amelie House	Eva's Phoenix	Fort York	St. Clare's	Toronto Total	Fredericton	Total
Employed part-time (up to 35 hours)	3(21%)	9(29%)	8(14%)	0%	20(18%)	6(33%)	26(20%)
Employed full-time (35-40 hours)	1(7%)	8(26%)	26(46%)	0%	35(32%)	1(6%)	36(28%)
Employed more than full-time	0%	0%	1(2%)	0%	1(1%)	0%	1(1%)
Unemployed	8(57%)	14(45%)	21(37%)	9(100%)	52(47%)	7(39%)	59(46%)

Homemaker, not seeking employment	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3(17%)	3(2%)
Retired, not seeking employment	2(14%)	0%	1(2%)	0%	3(3%)	1(6%)	4(3%)

Visible Minority

27 percent of all participants in Toronto and Fredericton indicated that they were a visible minority. Both Amelie House and Fort York had low visible minority representation in their programs, while Eva's Phoenix and St. Claire's had a more substantial visible minority presence.

Table No. 7 - Visible Minority

n=127	Amelie House	Eva's Phoenix	Fort York	St Clare's	Toronto Total	Fredericton	Grand Total
Yes	2(14%)	10(34%)	9(16%)	5(56%)	26(27%)	0(0%)	26(20%)
No	12(86%)	19(66%)	48(84%)	4(44%)	83(73%)	18(100%)	101(80%)

Aboriginal

The aboriginal presence in the ILA Project was minimal, representing only four per cent of the total participants. St. Clare's, Fort York and Eva's Phoenix each had a small aboriginal presence.

Table No. 8 - Aboriginal

n=128	Amelie House	Eva's Phoenix	Fort York	St Clare's	Toronto Total	Fredericton	Total
Yes	0%	29(3%)	(5%)	(11%)	5%	0%	4%
No	(100%)	1(97%)	(95%)	(89%)	95%	100%	96%

Disabled

Participants who self-identified that they had one or more disabilities made up 13 per cent of the overall ILA project. The female-only agencies in Toronto had the largest percentage of disabled participants, while Fort York had a minimal presence at five per cent.

Table No.9 - Disabled

n=128	Amelie House	Eva's Phoenix	Fort York	St Clare's	Toronto Total	Fredericton	Grand Total
Yes	4(29%)	5(16%)	(5%)	2(22%)	13%	12%	13%
No	12(71%)	26(84%)	(95%)	7(78%)	87%	88%	87%

Participant Savings, Matched Credits, and Financial Capability Training

Site partner agencies monitored key aspects of the participant’s savings experience in the ILA Project. They inputted participant bank information provided to the site through bank statements for each participant on a monthly basis. This information was then uploaded electronically to SEDI and the matched credits were allocated virtually until the time for cash-out. Matched savings refers to those savings that earned matched credits. Unmatched savings refer to those savings that do not earn credits (for example, participant savings that are deposited after a participant has earned the maximum number of matched credits – in other words additional savings). In Fredericton, every dollar saved was matched with two dollars. In Toronto, every dollar saved was matched with three dollars.

Participant Savings by Site

In total over the entire project, participants personally saved a total of \$33,139 dollars. Participants at Eva’s Phoenix saved the most on average per month at \$63.91 and Fredericton had the lowest average savings per month at \$25.06. Fort York has the highest average savings per participant at \$387.34. This might be a reflection of their existing forced savings program for Fort York residents.

Table No. 10 - Participant Savings by Site (matched and unmatched)

n=129	Amelie House	Eva’s Phoenix	Fort York	St. Clare's	Toronto Total	Fredericton	Total
Total Saving by Site	\$3,473	\$4,473	\$19,366	\$2,020	\$29,305	\$3,834	\$33,139
Average Savings Per Participant	\$315.78	\$319.56	\$387.34	\$288.67	\$327.84	\$213.02	\$270.43
Average Savings Per Month	\$44.53	\$63.91	\$55.02	\$38.86	\$50.58	\$25.06	\$37.82

Total Savings Amounts (matched and unmatched)

In terms of overall savings, Toronto participants had an incentive to save \$400 in order to maximize the matching fund component of the project, which, at a three to one ratio could result in a total matched credits and personal savings of up to \$1,600. In Fredericton the program matched up to \$500 at a rate of two to one resulting in a personal savings and matched credits of \$1,500. Any personal savings beyond the maximum personal savings amounts was not matched by the Funders but did remain in the participant’s savings accounts and under the participant’s control at all times.

The results show that 44 per cent of participants reached or exceeded the \$400 savings level. Additionally, 16 per cent saved more than \$500. This demonstrates that many participants continued to save as much as \$100 or more knowing that the funds would **not** be eligible for

matching. About one quarter of all participants opened accounts and did not save any money.

Table No.11 - Total Savings Amounts (matched and unmatched)

n=129	Amelie House	Eva's Phoenix	Fort York	St Clare's	Toronto Total	Fredericton	Grand Total
\$0	3(21%)	17(55%)	8(14%)	2(22%)	30(27%)	4(22%)	34(26%)
\$1-\$99	3(21%)	5(16%)	9(16%)	2(22%)	19(17%)	5(28%)	24(19%)
\$100-\$199	0(0%)	1(3%)	3(5%)	9(0%)	4(4%)	0(0%)	4(3%)
\$200-\$299	0(0%)	0(0%)	2(4%)	1(11%)	3(3%)	2(11%)	5(4%)
\$300-\$399	2(14%)	1(3%)	0(0%)	1(11%)	4(4%)	1(6%)	5(4%)
\$400-\$499	5(36%)	5(16%)	21(37%)	3(33%)	34(31%)	2(11%)	36(28%)
\$500+	1(7%)	2(6%)	14(25%)	0(0%)	17(15%)	4(22%)	21(16%)

Number of Active Savings Months by Site

An active savings month is defined as a \$10 increase from the past month's balance. Participants require 6 active savings months to be eligible to cash out. As the table clearly shows, there is a group of individuals that expressed an initial interest in the Project but did not follow through with the ongoing savings program. These circumstances pertained to 26 per cent of the Toronto participants and 22 per cent of the local participants in Fredericton who enrolled in the ILA but did not register any active savings months. Forty-seven per cent of participants were able to accumulate enough matched savings months to become eligible to cash out.

Table No. 12 - Number of active savings months (at least \$10 deposit in a month) by Site

n=129	Amelie House	Eva's Phoenix	Fort York	St Clare's	Toronto Total	Fredericton	Grand Total
0	3(21%)	17(55%)	7(12%)	2(22%)	29(26%)	0%	29(22%)
1	1(7%)	3(10%)	7(12%)	0%	11(10%)	6(33%)	17(13%)
2	1(7%)	0%	6(11%)	0%	7(6%)	1(6%)	8(6%)
3	0%	1(3%)	2(4%)	2(22%)	5(4%)	1(6%)	6(5%)
4	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1(6%)	1(1%)
5	3(21%)	2(6%)	0%	1(11%)	6(6%)	1(6%)	7(5%)
6	1(7%)	8(27%)	31(54%)	3(33%)	43(39%)	4(22%)	47(36%)
7	5(36%)	0%	3(5%)	0%	8(7%)	1(6%)	9(7%)
8	0%	0%	1(2%)	1(11%)	2(2%)	3(17%)	5(4%)

Number of Active Savings Months by Program Status

As can be seen in the table No.13, participants who cashed out saved for six or more months, a program requirement. The data collected indicates that 78 per cent of those that successfully completed the program had exactly six active savings months of \$10 or more. Twenty-two per cent of participants who cashed out had more than the required number of

active savings months. This could be a result of slower savings (a greater number of deposits of smaller amounts of money) or the use of the bank account as regular savings accounts.

Conversely, the largest percentage of drop-outs was comprised of individuals who initially signed up for the program but dropped out without accumulating any savings. This may reflect a lack of interest in the program, difficulty in opening a bank account or difficulty saving.

Table No.13 - Number of active savings months (deposits more than \$10) by Program Status

No. of active savings months (n=129)	Cashed Out	Dropped out	Grand Total
0	0%	29(41%)	29(23%)
1	0%	17(24%)	17(13%)
2	0%	8(11%)	8(6%)
3	0%	7(10%)	7(5%)
4	0%	1(1%)	1(1%)
5	0%	6(8%)	6(5%)
6	45(78%)	2(3%)	47(36%)
7	8(14%)	1(1%)	9(7%)
8	4(8%)	1(1%)	5(4%)

Matched Credits Earned

Participants earned matching credits based on their savings deposits. In Toronto, participants earned three dollars for every dollar they deposited. In Fredericton, participants earned two dollars per dollar saved.

Credits Earned

The participants in the project earned a total of \$78, 937 dollars in matched credits through the ILA Project. The majority of these credits were earned in the Toronto. Participants earned an average of \$611.91 in matched credits.

Table No. 14 - Credits Earned

N=129	Amelie House	Eva's Phoenix	Fort York	St. Clare's	Toronto Total	Fredericton	Total
Total Credits Earned	\$9,123	\$10,276	\$46,301	\$5,867	\$71,569	\$7,368	\$78,937
Average Credits Earned per participant	\$651.64	\$331.48	\$812.29	\$651.88	\$644.76	\$409.33	\$611.91

Credits Earned by Amount

Among the Toronto sites, 44 per cent of the 129 participants were able to earn the maximum \$1,200 matching credits based on their activity. At Fort York, 61 per cent of all participants earned the maximum matching amount, far beyond the other success rates at other sites in Toronto. In Fredericton, 25 per cent of the participants were able to earn the maximum \$1,000 matching funds.

Table No. 15 - Credits Earned by Amount

N=129	Amelie House	Eva's Phoenix	Fort York	St. Clare's	Toronto Total	Fredericton	Total
\$0	3(21%)	17(55%)	8(14%)	2(22%)	30(27%)	4(22%)	34(26%)
\$1-\$299	3(21%)	5(16%)	9(16%)	2(22%)	19(17%)	5(28%)	24(19%)
\$300-\$599	0%	1(3%)	3(5%)	0%	4(4%)	2(11%)	6(5%)
\$600-\$899	1(7%)	0%	2(4%)	1(11%)	4(4%)	2(11%)	6(5%)
\$900-\$1199	2(14%)	1(3%)	0%	2(22%)	5(5%)	5(28%)	10(8%)
\$1200	5(36%)	7(23%)	35(61%)	2(22%)	49(44%)	0%	49(38%)

Financial Capability Training

Participants were required to take at least 10 hours of financial capability training before they were eligible to cash out. The ILA financial capability curriculum was a 15 hour course and was delivered at multiple times to ensure that all participants could attend. There is a correlation between the numbers of hours of financial capability training taken and the likelihood of cash out. Conversely, participants who did not cash out were less likely to be involved in the financial capability training.

N=129	Cashed Out	Dropped Out	Average
Average number of hours of Financial Capability Training	13.2	5.74	9.04

Program Success

Once participants have saved for six months and completed the financial capability training, they are able to cash out their matched credits for first and last months rent/damage deposits or for certain utility hook ups. The definition of success used in this project was the ability to access matched credits for rental housing and housing supports.

Program Success Rate

As seen in the table below, 44 per cent of the 129 enrolled participants were able to use their matched funds and move out into the rental market. It is important to note that 57 per cent of those participants who opened bank accounts cash-out of the project successfully.

Table No. 16 - Program Success Rate

N=129	Cashed Out	Dropped Out	Total
Number of Participants with Cash Out	57	72	129
Percentage	44%	56%	100

Percentage of Total Participants Who Cashed Out by Site

The project success rate, if using cash-out as a measure of success, varied by site and is influenced by the number of enrolled participants. The percentage of participants with at least one cash out varied from 26 per cent of all participants at Eva's Phoenix to 58 per cent at Fort York.

Table No. 17 - Percentage of Total Participants who Cashed Out by Site

N=129	Amelie House	Eva's Phoenix	Fort York	St. Clare's	Toronto Total	Fredericton	Total
Number of Participants with cash outs	6(43%)	8(26%)	33(58%)	3(33%)	50(45%)	7(39%)	57(44%)

Program Success Rate for Social Assistance Recipients

Participants on Social Assistance were, on average, less successful than all other participants. This program complimented a Provincial administrated program in Ontario that provided some housing support for people in need. Participants were allowed, as a result provincial approval, to access both sources of funding. Of the 24 social assistance recipients, only seven were able to access matched funds.

Table No. 18 - Program Success Rate for Social Assistance Recipients

N=129	Cashed Out	Dropped Out
Number of SA Participants	7	17
Percent	39%	61%

Program Success by Average Income

The average income for participants who cashed out in the program was \$10,213.57. The average income for a participant who did not complete the program objectives was \$7,372.56. Within the group of participants who cashed out, reported income at intake varied from \$400 to \$25,000 dollars.

Table No. 19 - Program Success by Average Income

N=129	Cashed Out	Dropped Out	All Participants
Average Current Income	\$10,213.57	\$7,372.56	\$8,627.89

Percent of Credits Used by Program Site

All participants earned a total of \$78,937 matched credits and eligible participants used a total of \$65,547 in matched credits to support their housing transition. Eligible participants used 83 per cent of all the credits earned by all participants in the project.

Table No. 20 - Percent of Credits Used by Program Site

N=129	Amelie House	Eva's Phoenix	Fort York	St. Clare's	Toronto Total	Fredericton	Total
Total Credits Used	\$6,936	\$9,199	\$39,543	\$3,517	\$59,196	\$6,350	\$65,547
Total Credits Earned	\$9,123	\$10,276	\$46,301	\$5,867	\$71,569	\$7,368	\$78,937
Percentage of Credits Used	76%	89.5%	85.5%	60%	83%	86%	83%

2.4. THE QUALITATIVE RESULTS

A combination of focus group discussions for participants and a structured questionnaire for key informants were used to collect qualitative data for analysis. The focus group discussions attempted to elicit thoughts, opinions, and attitudes of ILA participants on issues related to the major aspects of the program. These responses collected during the focus groups and key informant interviews are organized into sections dealing with key elements of the program which include:

- Initial information about the project;
- Learning about the ILA;
- Financial capability experiences;
- Challenges with saving, skills learned; and
- Personal reflections on the ILA generally.

In addition, verbatim vignettes that shed light on the attitudes and opinions of respondents are provided to support conclusions that have been derived from the qualitative data.

Results of Key Informant Interviews

A Key Informant provided the following quote that highlights a perspective on the practical applications of the ILA project:

“As the entire hostel program moves towards integration...there is a re-focus taking place of who we are and what we do, there is more focus now on re integrating our clients in the community as opposed to what we have found ourselves doing over the last few years of just being warehouses. So if we’re going to accept this new direction and focus then the ILA Project becomes paramount.”

The Key Informant Interviews were completed with agency that was charged with the administration of the ILA at the Fredericton YMCA, Eva’s Phoenix, Fort York residence, St. Clare’s Residence, and Amelie House. Bank staff were also consulted.

Impact of the ILA on Clients

Staff at the participating community-based agency rated the project as complementary to their own initiatives and critical in assisting the graduates of their various program access stable housing. It should be noted that staff at the Edmonton Community Loan Fund and Housing Trust Fund also felt this way. The financial capability training component was a key element of this process. ILA participants learned to alter spending behaviors from subsistence-based patterns to the development of immediate, medium and long term goal setting behaviors.

- “The self esteem piece is huge, to know that they were actually had a bank account, that they were saving, that they were working through their issues and taking control of their lives made a huge difference”
- “A couple of them saved more than was needed for the project because they developed a culture of saving.”
- “Support through the ILA Project made stronger links with graduates, and so they return and keep in contact more than other clients due to the case management and the interaction with staff”

Connection to Other Transition Programming

At St. Clare’s Residence, the project resonated with their mission of placing at risk populations in stable housing. Out of both of Key Informant Interviews came the idea of a *continuum of support* that had different points of intervention for people in differing states of disadvantage. As such the client groups was able to access different programs to generate sufficient savings to move from the transition house into stable housing.

The FCT reinforced other existing initiatives at the transitional housing facilities such as the saving projects at Eva’s Phoenix, where employed clients are, as part of the existing programming, required to save 30 per cent of their earnings, and at Fort York where a savings program is in place for each resident which could see up to 60 per cent of a resident’s income being saved in a savings account.

The FCT training not only impacted the recipients but the administrators as well. Respondents commented that the project, and especially the Financial Capability Training, developed both client and staff capacity.

Coordinator Views on Program Attrition

There were many reasons for program attrition. The perceived reasons given by program coordinators from the front line staff included:

- Mental health challenges and drug/alcohol infractions were common causes. In these circumstances the rule breakers were typically relocated to emergency shelters or Detox facilities when available.
- Most of the ILA Project graduates achieved at least subsidized housing with a small percent going to market rent and a very few going back to spouses/family.
- The mentally ill and drug dependent persons constitute the majority of the shelter re-entries and returns to the street.
- Expulsion from the transition house for breaking rules at the house.

Specific Administrative and Program Challenges

Many Key Informants, including the person who provided the following quote, identified the time frame set for this pilot as a restrictive for many of their residences:

“A project like this does take time, we’re not talking about people with a lot of money so for them to turn something around they do need a time line, lots of encouragement and that takes time. People move through success phases and failure phases, a lot of people go up and down and there wasn’t a lot of time for people to get used to the concept.”

All interviewees reported a strong positive relationship with SEDI and were sure to complement SEDI staff on their support, patience, understanding, and flexibility. Amongst the most common areas referenced were IT/MIS assistance and project management.

This being said, there were a variety of initial challenges involved with the project and, as such, the project sites did voice some suggested changes to the project, including:

- The initial definition of transitional housing did not match well the transient population in Fredericton. While this was corrected at the early onset of the project, it was suggested that Project Designers need to work directly with Housing Providers in the locales to ensure that the local situation and population characteristics are adequately addressed.
- At St. Clare’s Residence they encountered the problem of matching the restrictions of the ILA to the service provision structure of their agency. Residents have a two-year stay at their residence and the ILA Project ran for only one year. Many potential participants opted for the longer stay in the transition house due to the security and service provisions offered and did not decide to enroll in the program. The project’s time frame was problematic here and tended to exclude many participants who could have otherwise been successful in this project.
- Full time students were excluded from the project, as they were not thought to be the applicable population for this project due to the fact that many are only “temporarily poor”. There was a suggestion that a project such as the ILA could assist students.

- The issue of the single bank for the project caused some concern as many in this population may have at one point run afoul of specific financial institutions. As a result, some participants were unwilling to enroll in the project utilizing a financial institution with which they have a negative history. It was, therefore, suggested that perhaps the banking arrangement could be made more flexible.
- It was identified that there were inadequate resources especially for staff time required by the project. These projects require adequate resources to run them effectively.

Focus Group Results

As noted earlier in Section 1.3 the utilization-focused approach¹² was used for this study. This approach specifies three goal levels that are identified below and provide pertinent information from this study within each.

Immediate Level Outcomes

The following Intermediate Level goals relate directly to program implementation and participation.

Decision to Participate in the ILA Project

In Toronto, as described earlier, the project partners were transition houses. In all cases the participants were recruited from residents of the designated transition houses. Thus participants learned about the program mainly from the staff persons assigned to work on the ILA Project. At later stages, discussions between ILA participants, especially successful ones and other residents, was an additional way that information about the program was spread.

In Fredericton, the YMCA offers a range of services to residents. However, it does not provide transitional housing services directly. Therefore, participants learned about the project from the advertisements in the newspaper, on bulletin boards, and on posters. The lack of direct contact with transitional facility residents created some recruitment challenges for the agency.

Participant's Initial Response to the ILA Project

The initial response from participants to the ILA project reflected substantial skepticism. This is something that has been experienced in other Independent Development Account projects and programs.¹³ It has been termed the “Too Good to Be True” problem. The ILA Case Managers experienced this as well.

¹² Please see Patton, M. (1997). Utilization-focused evaluation: The New Century Text (pp. 301-338). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

¹³ Sherraden, Michael. 1991. Assets and the Poor: A New American Welfare Policy. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc and Kingwell, Paul, Michael Dowie, Barbara Holler, and Liza Jimenez. May 2004. “Helping People Help Themselves: An Early Look at learn\$ave.” Ottawa: Social Research and Demonstration Corporation.

In terms of data gathered on this subject, male participants and potential participants appeared to be more suspicious than females, as illustrated by the following vignettes:

- “Something must be up, what’s the catch?”
- “Maybe city people are more cynical, but couple of people heard it, government program giving you stuff...what’s the catch?”
- “Initially I did, I thought basically, what’s the catch, right? Once I heard more about it, realized it was a good idea.”

On the other hand, female participants tended to be more optimistic:

- “I was excited that it was going to be happening...I was going to learn a little bit more about financial planning, to get my money organized better...and then I was going to be able to get some money for when I go to move, or pay lots of things, so I don’t have to go in debt.”
- “I was at the exhibition, I just happen to be leaving, and I was going down the concession hallway, and there was the poster, it said people in transition...I thought, well I am in transition, I am going from one thing trying to start another...what the heck, I am giving a call...when she explained the program to me, I thought it’s just too good to be true, it’s the perfect thing at the perfect time.”
- “I thought the matching program is really generous. She [the ILA coordinator] explained that we have to make deposits; I thought it was well explained up front what our part needs to be in order to qualify for the matching fund.”

Reasons for Participation in the ILA Project

Information about the project produced excitement and enthusiasm in both men and women and encouraged participation in the project.

Participants were mostly drawn to the financial incentive and its assistance in paying first and last months rent:

- “It’s money...when it was proposed...\$480...in fact we received \$1,200, sure that’s an attention getter and for me not having any savings at that point, I went for it and I pursued it.”
- “I was living in a transition house, I just started getting a job...I wasn’t paying much rent where I staying...I see an opportunity that I could put some money in the bank very quickly and I took advantage of it.”
- “I knew that I had to have first and last when I left here, regardless leaving here...I have to have first and last have to get a place...minimum \$80 bucks, I was working, so it wasn’t hard for me. But thinking about that first and last, that help at the end, that’s what convinced me. There were no catches.”

Learning about the ILA

Initial experiences with the ILA Project, both positive and negative, had a great deal to do with the type of interaction between the site partner contact person and the participants. One agency in Toronto reported a higher drop out rate at the beginning because of a clash of personalities between the potential participants and the agency contact. When things

worked well much of it had to do with a sense of being supported and respected by the ILA administrators.

- “I made the call and [the ILA coordinator] asked to have me come in and talk with her, just to give me an overview of the program to see if I am eligible for it. She took some information from me, I am eligible, and from there, we just did the next step, she explained the project to me, how it works...she got me set up at the bank, it was great...it was quick.”
- “She explained it very well, really clear what had to be done, what was expected of us.”
- “(Named Agency staff) made it interesting because he put in his personal experience that made it real. It wasn’t just a class, this guy’s been through everything.”

Intermediate Level Outcomes

These outcomes relate to specific accomplishments or changes expected from participating in a project.

Financial Capability Training

Without exception, participants found the financial capability training (FCT) very valuable. Most considered it the part of the project with the greatest long-term impact.

For many, the training provided information to which they had not previously been exposed, and for others it taught basic skills that they had attempted to acquire previously with little success.

- “I attempted several times to have a budget, but for some reason never succeeded at it. I’ve tried to do it several times in the past...but it never worked. Some of it is remedial, sort of primary...but once we got into budgeting but this thing here showed you actually how to make a budget work...they give you the actual tools to use, which I found helpful.”
- “I found I have to go to these meetings that taught you about financial places...like how you spend your money, VISA cards, banks, all these information. It was a lot, because there is so much information, and really helpful information.”
- “Well just budgeting for yourself and how to deal with banks and other kinds of things like that. I was in a marriage where I wasn’t in charge of any of the money, so it was all new to me. I only have a chequing account just recently, so it was all good information.”

Challenges with Savings

Participants found the most difficult part of saving to be getting started, maintaining the discipline when things got tough and resisting the temptation to treat themselves.

- “Trying to actually find enough to do it, because I have stuff in collection...and it’s like, eat, food...it just never seems enough.”

- “In the beginning for me, it’s difficult because a lot happened – job, clothes...in the beginning for me it was...I wanted to get pop, and I couldn’t...in the early months it was a real challenge, now I am further along.”
- “Knowing you could take the money whenever you wanted...there was a couple of times I thought...I’d like to have this. I know I could just go to the bank and get the money...actually I did go and take out some at one time, but I placed it right back.”

Ultimate Level Outcomes

These outcomes refer to the broader or longer-term changes in development or life behaviors that are expected from project participation.

Impact of the ILA on Participants

Participants were lavish in their praise for the ways in which the ILA Project changed their life trajectories. They identified self-confidence, independence, and control as key elements of the changes that successful participation in the ILA Project produced.

- “The one thing that I thought...I had my own apartment before right? Coming back a little bit...but I was in a drug-infested area, stuff like that. The thing is, this time I moved into an apartment where...it’s a beautiful area, I am next to Forest Hill where the rich people are, you know...if you have that money in your hand, you have the confidence to go look in better areas, you don’t have to feel like I’ve got to take less because this is what I am used to, if that’s the case.”
- “It’s more like you’re in control of something...if you come from an abused background, like I come from, it seems like you’ve all control in your life when you come to a residence from that kind of thing, and then somebody give you something that you had to work on, that it take some will-power to work on, and something that gives you some control, I think it’s great.”
- “Having money in the bank and making a conscious decision not to touch it because you know you’re using it for something that was going to get you somewhere.”

The Importance of Thinking Ahead

Participants recognized the need for longer-term thinking and the self-sufficiency that can be gained through this.

- “How to manage your life...this is what you spent your money on this month, but you know next month you do the same damn thing, these are the things you put your money away for so there is roof over your head, there is food in your fridge, there is clothes on your back...and there is transportation costs. These are things you know you got to have every month; these are the things that are your priorities, like everybody else out there.”
- “Priority number one is a roof over your head...every time you put money away, you should think of it as that’s a roof over your head. Prioritizing I think it work, but with that, the roof over your head is the most important; I learned it from Fort York, it’s nice to have a roof over your head...learned it from ILA, that this is important.”
- “But did you have a chance to sit by yourself, and say to yourself, you know what, I know I have to save. Although right now, the money might now be flowing, but you

picked up a gig next week...that put another couple hundred of dollars a week or fortnight in your pocket, have you learned enough from the program that you know, I need to put aside this.”

Overcoming the Challenge of Social Inclusion

In addition to the money management skills participants listed other life skills. One critical skill was learning to trust people and beginning to believe that there really were people who understood what you were going through.

- “Trusting somebody, not everything has got some strings attached. I thought that was a good experience.”
- “I think we all learned confidence just by socializing and talking too.”
- “Seeing everybody else in the same situation...you’re down, you’re out, you’re having a hard time, So you develop some sort of support system, somebody who knows who you are... we all have a list here...everybody shares numbers, emails, contacts.”

2.5. THE CASE COMPARISON

A comparison of the Toronto, Fredericton, and Edmonton site experiences presents an instructive overview of the successes and challenges associated with implementing the ILA project in different regions, and in partnership with different agencies. All the agencies responsible for implementation the project were required to address a variety of institutional and local issues.

An essential element leading to ILA success is the ability to integrate the project into overall support service delivery process offered by transitional housing agencies. For example, at the Toronto sites, the FCT was administered on-site and facilitated by agency staff that were able to incorporate the ILA into their ongoing case management responsibilities. The transitional housing format in this case provided an excellent opportunity to incorporate the ILA Project into a broader support system.

In Fredericton, the YMCA provided the FCT in several settings but was able to connect with participants because a single staff member, who acted as the ILA facilitator, was dedicated to operating the project. The presence of this individual provided the consistency and continuity needed to successfully administer the project.

The ILA Project encountered difficulties in Edmonton because the project administration was very disjointed. The Edmonton Community Loan Fund relied on a number of individuals to deliver the ILA. They, in turn, hired independent facilitators to present the FCT while service agency staff was responsible for recruitment and follow-up. The absence of an ongoing and overall managerial presence was detrimental as there was not a constant message being delivered by someone the participants knew and learned to trust.

A comparison of Fredericton and Edmonton, the two sites that were not direct transitional housing providers, helps us to understand the elements that can serve as surrogates for the cluster of services that transitional housing offers. The first element was the commitment of the partners involved with the ILA Project. In Fredericton, the YMCA provided the administrative and client support required for the project to succeed. As described earlier,

the YMCA's commitment to the ILA was so clearly defined that it informed the behaviour of all their staff that dealt with the ILA or the project participants. Edmonton, on the other hand, recruited agencies that, for the most part, were not sufficiently motivated to properly administer the ILA model. An inability to involve suitable transitional housing partners created difficulties, as was illustrated in one instance where an agency chose not to resume offering FCT courses following a remodeling interruption.

The matched savings component was most effective when it was aligned with participant bank account openings, the FCT facilitation and mandatory attendance at the FCT by participants as well as the ongoing case management process. In Toronto and Fredericton the course material placed a definite emphasis on the savings component of the ILA Project. Participants constantly received the message from agency staff that they had to save not only to earn the matched credits, but also to take advantage of this rare opportunity to turn their lives around. In contrast, the Edmonton FCT focused mainly on learning how to save, while virtually neglecting the matched savings element. This resulted in the absence of clear benchmarks of success for participants. Thus, the FCT training remained very much an intellectual exercise for participants in Edmonton.

In addition to the FCT delivery, success was directly tied to the process used to establish the savings accounts. Both Toronto and Fredericton required participants to physically walk into a financial institution and open an account, creating a sense of ownership over the process. Meanwhile, in Edmonton, a bank account was opened by the Edmonton Community Loan Fund on behalf of the participants, thus removing a vital connection between the participant and the realities of the savings money management process.

These different outcomes suggest that if the participants are not encouraged through the matched savings project to develop tangible successes, they may not be able to muster the discipline to make regular bank deposits and, it can be deduced, that the value of FCT is reduced.

Results of the Edmonton Model

Due to the above noted project operation differences and the fact that 34 of the 69 original participants (49 per cent) did not qualify under the ILA Project criteria, it was decided to not include results from Edmonton in a comparison study with the ILA sites in Fredericton in Toronto. Instead, the results will form an independent case study.

Results from the Edmonton data indicate that only three of the participants that completed the FCT successfully cashed out of the project. This translates into a cash-out rate of nine per cent. Meanwhile 22 per cent of the participants deposited savings and earned matching credits, but did not cash out by the end of the ILA Project. Over two-thirds of all eligible participants completed the FCT, but did not save any funds over the duration of their participation.

Reasons for Edmonton's ILA results revolve around the administration of the project. The ECLF hired independent facilitators to deliver the FCT, creating a disconnect between the case managers and the ILA. Additionally, the case managers did not appear to actively monitor participant savings decisions or encourage participants to save. In fact, there was

some question about the fact that many participants may not have known about matching funds available.

Another explanation for the Edmonton outcome is that the savings component was not properly integrated into the FCT material. The presentation of the ILA in Edmonton focused on the FCT while lacking the significant savings component. Participants did have an interest in the training component, as evidenced by the 69 per cent who completed the project FCT but did not save or cash out of the project, as they were unaware of the other project components. During the focus group with participants from the Salvation Army transitional housing project it was evident that interest in the FCT was quite significant and many of those in the session found the weekly meetings to be an important component in their recovery process. However, when asked about the savings component of the project, only two of the eight participants had made deposits. The difficulty here may also be due to the fact that these participants were employed full-time, were actively building up savings for goals not associated with the ILA Project, and therefore were likely not appropriate candidates for the need based ILA Project.

The ECLF made an effort to deliver the project to a group of recent immigrants through a partnership with Mennonite Center for Newcomers, an Edmonton transitional housing provider, however, language issues created barriers to project delivery that could not be properly addressed. In another instance, the ECLF did not continue with the Oxford House program, as the facility closed for renovations as well as a lack of interest in continuing with the project as expressed during the key informant interviews.

3. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND RESULTS DISCUSSION

To design and subsequently implement this project, SEDI worked through an iterative process with the site staff to ensure that the site variations and local circumstances that would be most relevant and informative were accounted for. Perhaps most importantly, SEDI ensured that the project design and operation was informed by potential participants, their needs, their desire to achieve self-sufficiency and their willingness to have a mutual responsibility in this project so that the benefits from the project were not seen as only a “hand-out”.

3.1. IMPLEMENTATION AND OPERATIONS

While the three project sites vary on many dimensions, including agency structure and governance, staffing, geography, social and cultural content, provincial political environment, and local economic conditions, this study sought to determine the effectiveness and applicability of the matched savings incentives and financial literacy education components within these environments and test the efficacy of using the ILA for individuals and families living within transitional housing facilities in these locales. This test and resulting project research was aimed at ultimately being able to determine if such a project could be “rolled-out” on a wider scale nationally and if so what components were successful and could be beneficial to those living within a transitional housing situation looking to move to a more self-sufficient lifestyle.

The ILA Project was administered either directly by transitional housing providers or through other types of community-based social service delivery agencies who had connections to housing providers that service this target population. While the three project sites varied on many dimensions, including agency structure and governance, staffing, geography, social and cultural content, provincial political environment, and local economic conditions, we do have the ability to draw conclusions from the research.

The outcome of this study was dependent on a review of both the qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data set, based on focus group meetings with participants and key informant interviews with agency and bank staff directly responsible for administering the ILA Project, were key to determining the reflections of those involved with the project. This qualitative data worked to gain insight into how participant’s ideas, attitudes, backgrounds, and individual life experiences determined their experiences in the ILA, what were the salient factors that informed their response to the project, what their opinions were in terms of the project component’s value to them and how the ILA Project could be improved.

Although the sample utilized for this project is relatively small, the richness of the information and the consistency of the patterns produced through the research provide both robust and credible results. There is enough evidence from this project to create a functional template for viable ILA implementation in most urban and rural locations across the country.

The researchers also undertook a quantitative review that was based upon data from recruitment, retention, and savings histories, cash-outs and base line socio-demographic data on participants collected by each partner agency and uploaded to a central MIS system maintained by SEDI. The quantitative data focus was to identify the successful components of the project in terms of practical applications that can be quantified in order to inform future programmatic applications in terms of participant characteristics and seeks to discern patterns of association between these characteristics and levels of participation, savings histories and success rates for cash-outs, agency models and successful outcomes for the ILA Project.

3.2. KEY FINDINGS

Powerful evidence of the viability of the conceptual model consisting of the immediate element (joining the ILA), the intermediate element (FCT and successful saving) and the ultimate level (successful reintegration into the housing market) is offered by that group of participants who continued to save past the point that their contributions would be matched.

Perhaps the most relevant research question relating to this project's research outcomes is: Can an ILA Project or its individual components provide the necessary incentives and supports to allow those living within transitional housing facilities to gain the tools and practical necessities to allow for their transition into a more self-sufficient lifestyle within more affordable and more appropriate housing?

The project research and evidence presented from this study indicates a positive YES to this question. The key findings from this research are presented below.

i) The ILA matched savings model can work financially for people living in transitional housing.

Participants in the project all had limited incomes and assets and were living within very constrained circumstances at the time of enrolment and throughout their progress in the project. Under these circumstances, participants saved a total of \$33,169 of which \$27,540 was eligible for matching contributions. In fact, over 44 per cent of participants reached their savings goals, cashed out and moved on to a more self-sufficient life style. In addition, if one considers that 57 of the 100 participants who opened savings accounts actually cashed-out then the success rate can be seen as considerably higher. The research provided that the savings were encouraged by a positive participant attitude, strong case management support and by the financial capability tools that were available to every participant.

ii) The matched savings component was a critical element in the process.

This project has shown that, by promoting savings with a matching component, a welcoming financial institution, and with support such as strong case management, participants have the incentive to save. Participants and agency staff reported that the matching component was important in generating initial interest and provided a tangible outcome that helped to sustain commitment during difficult times. The match also provided a clear benchmark of success in both the short term (a bank account and real savings) and in

the longer term (first and last/damage deposit at cash out) that improved their sense of self. In addition, having access to assets also offered participants a new sense of control over their own financial decisions.

iii) The ability to accumulate first and last month's rent or damage deposit was important to project success and participant transitions.

Savings goals in projects have to be relevant and achievable. The matched credits allowed participants to compete more effectively for the limited amounts of housing in local markets. This project also provided for a more comprehensive search of available units, resulting in better housing in better locations and improved bargaining positions with prospective landlords. This led to better treatment and reduced the stress and uncertainty associated with a housing move. Participant testimonials also identified this clearly. Please see Section 3.1.

iv) Financial Capability Training (FCT) provided an important tool as a life skill and to help them through to project completion.

Both project participants and administrative staff identified the long-term value that was provided through the financial capability components. While the value of the technical information was identified as key to understanding real-world banking and savings environments, participants also identified the discipline they learned through the saving process as important to their savings behaviour.

It is important to note here that all of the administrative staff involved in the facilitation of the project indicated their desire to continue to facilitate this component of the project and expand it to include all of their residents.

v) Case Management was an important project component to ensure that participants were kept informed, engaged and were able to cash out.

Case management was an important element of the process. Although participating agencies had limited capacity to direct case management resources specifically to the ILA participants¹⁴, the benefits observed included more focused response to projects, greater success in accomplishing personal goals, a greater sense of independence and control and more positive contact with the agency after the completion of their tenure in transitional housing. Case management support was also critical to the success of the FCT.

vi) An ILA project needs to have a realistic time-frame so that it can be combined adequately with existing services.

Many people find that the shock of homelessness and the reality of emergency shelters damage the psyche in important ways. Key informants and focus group participants talked about the need to heal as an important prerequisite to moving forward. ILAs would work

¹⁴ Administrative fees were provided in-part for the administrative staff at all locations. However the project staff did identify that additional resources would be required to administer the project more adequately.

best if they were able to operate within the time frames for living in and moving out of the various transitional houses.

vii) Additional supports make the ILA components more successful for those with higher needs when utilized within a transitional housing facility.

Many clients arrive at a transitional housing facility with addiction, abuse, health and/or mental health issues. Identifying their needs and connecting them to the necessary support services are important to their healing and their transitions out of homelessness. Transitional housing generally has the capacity to perform these functions. This housing stage, that may take varying amounts of time to achieve, is often the critical point at which projects like the ILA project are most attractive.

viii) Based on quantitative analysis, gender was a predictor of project completion and success.

Male participants cashed out at a higher rate even if we control for the higher percentage of males in the pilot. Of the total number of cash outs, 15 were made by women and 42 by men. Controlled for the number of each gender enrolled, a higher percentage of men cashed-out. This was affected by the longer period that the women in the project were allowed to stay in their transitional houses. In many cases, this was longer than the duration of the ILA project and reduced the imperative to move out.

ix) Based on quantitative analysis, age was also a predictor of project completion and success.

Based on the sample, older participants were more likely to cash out than younger participants. This may have been affected by the project success at Fort York, which provides housing for a slightly older demographic.

x) Based on quantitative analysis, income was a predictor of project completion and success.

Participants who cashed out reported higher current year incomes. This may be a reflection of an increase in disposable income that they were then able to save.

xi) Based on quantitative analysis, educational attainment and race were not predictors of project completion and success.

There were no discernable correlations between project success and either level of prior educational attainment or race.

3.3. PARTICIPANT TESTIMONIALS

The following four participant testimonials were developed through interviews between an independent Communications Consultant and the participants directly. The Consultant also drafted the individual synopses and delivered them directly to SEDI with the participant's consent respecting publication.

Fred's Story

– Applied Learning

“Honestly, if it weren't for Fort York Residence and SEDI, I wouldn't be where I am today.”

With a retirement savings plan, mutual funds and company stock options, Fred is in a position many would envy. Yet it wasn't that long ago that Fred's financial management skills left much to be desired. As he describes it, his savings plan consisted of shoving his weekly earnings in his wallet and praying it lasted. Sometimes it did and sometimes it didn't. That was the way Fred lived for years, cycling through a series of temporary menial jobs and temperamental roommates.

The cycle came to a crashing halt the weekend he lost his job and his apartment. He remembers it well since it was the same weekend his parents celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. After spending his last few dollars on a bed at a travellers' hostel, Fred turned to a community agency for help. He was referred to Fort York Residence, an employment-focused shelter for men.

At Fort York, things started to turn around. Fred began to volunteer at a local animal shelter. “Walking the dogs gave me a lot of time to think about where I should really be headed, and how to advance my potential.” At the same time, staff at Fort York Residence invited Fred to enroll in SEDI's Independent Living Accounts program. The matched savings program required participants to put \$80 a month into a savings account while participating in a community-based financial management course. According to Fred, the most exciting part of the program was the financial management course offered at Fort York Residence. “The facilitators were excellent and used real life examples to provide context for what we were learning. Everybody in class had something to say and got excited.”

Fred was so enthusiastic about the ILA program he began to open up more with his family and tell them about all the amazing things he was learning and the progress he was making in his life. In fact, he says he has phoned his family more in the last year than he had in his whole life. He felt like he finally had something to be proud of and talk about, whether it was SEDI, Fort York Residence, or being invited to submit a resume for a full time position

at Cadbury's. The competition for the job was fierce, and over 300 applicants wrote the screening test.

When Cadbury's finally called three months later and offered him the job, Fred was over the moon. Now he would be able to put into practice everything he'd learned in class. "The classroom laid the foundation. The premise of everything was to save." Fred did just that, contributing to his RRSP and buying stock in Cadbury's. "I'm not just putting my money in the bank, I'm investing it."

Fred used the matched savings to help establish himself in his new home. The rented main floor apartment came with brand new appliances and hardwood floors, and best of all, no more troublesome roommates. Fred has high praise for both Fort York Residence and SEDI. One showed him he really could live independently and the other gave him the financial skills to do so.

Carolyn's Story

– Transitioning to Self-Sufficiency!

"Are you in transition?" asked the brochure that changed Carolyn's life. It wasn't what she was expecting out of a trip to the fall fair, but the YMCA's brochure held out new hope for the single mother who had recently left an abusive situation with nothing more than a suitcase and \$8 in her bank account. She decided to learn more about the Independent Living Account matched savings program they were offering.

Although the program was full when Carolyn called the YMCA, staff managed to find room for her to attend. "At first I thought it was too good to be true, that there must be some sort of catch." Not so, reassured the staff who supported all the program participants. Participants were asked to save up to \$80 from their monthly income while building their financial management skills. The training helped Carolyn reinforce good decisions. "They confirmed the importance of savings and not using credit to buy things. Now I save up for what I want."

Carolyn met her savings commitment out of her earnings as a part-time administrative assistant. Later, when she and her daughter moved into their own apartment and Carolyn enrolled in a pharmacy program, the 3:1 matched savings brought her peace of mind. Since she could pay two month's rent up front, she had the freedom to focus her attention on school. "I got 95 per cent in my first course!" she says, looking forward to a new career.

Carolyn hopes awareness of the program grows so more people can benefit from the opportunities it creates. She certainly has. "I'm building a better life for myself and my daughter and I can't say enough good things about the Independent Living Account program."

Joe's Story

– The Joy of Banking

Chalk it up to the Independent Living Account program – Joe now enjoys banking. In fact, you can even find him joking with the tellers at his local branch. While that might not seem like much to most of us, it's big step for someone who spent seven years on the streets. After moving to Toronto from London, Ontario, Joe was living under a bridge when an outreach worker connected him to Eva's Phoenix, a shelter for youth.

There, he heard about the Independent Living Account program. The program encourages self-sufficiency by matching the savings of participants and providing them with money management skills. Although Joe was interested in the ILA program, he thought his bad bank debts would disqualify him. The manager at Eva's Phoenix urged him to reconsider and wrote a letter of support that helped pave the way for him to join.

As part of the program, Joe attended financial management workshops with nine other youth. Joe had praise for the facilitator and said he learned practical lessons, and how to make better financial decisions such as foregoing impulsive purchases. While Joe was soaking up new financial skills, he made regular trips to the bank to deposit his wages as a mechanic's apprentice. Joe says he found the savings part of the program easy, as he had been used to having so little for so long.

After completing the program, Joe used his match savings to set himself up in his new one bedroom apartment. The pride is audible in Joe's voice as he describes his well-furnished surroundings, complete with back yard and laundry. Joe now hopes that more people like him will be able to use the Independent Living Account Program to get their own new start on life.

Simon's Story

– To Learn and To Teach

“I thought I wouldn't learn a thing and I learned a lot.”

For Simon, those lessons included the fact that the price of three cups of coffee a day annualized is equivalent to the price of a trip to Costa Rica or a lap top computer. That's just one of the practical and powerful lessons Simon learned as a participant in the Independent Living Account (ILA) project at Fort York Residence in Toronto.

Simon came to Fort York Residence after eight years in the shelter system in Toronto and was convinced he didn't need any financial management training. After all, he had degree and experience on Bay Street. Soft-spoken and thoughtful, Simon admits that he knew more about international monetary law than how to manage his own affairs. Sitting in a classroom once a week with 20 other residents at Fort York, Simon began to take in the lessons about day-to-day financial capability training or money management. According to Simon, the instructors did an admirable job of including everyone in the training, no matter what their level of knowledge or experience. Not only that, but they also helped the residents at Fort York reestablish a good credit rating and brought in bank managers as guest speakers. “The instructors helped break things down into practical, achievable steps.” Those steps were reinforced in the classroom as residents shared their experience each time someone got a good credit rating or paid off a debt.

Simon admits he found the saving part of the Independent Living Account program a challenge and wondered sometimes if he would ever see the light at the end of the tunnel. What seemed like a sacrifice at first got easier along the way, and Simon was not only debt-free in 11 months instead of the five years he had originally calculated but also he was also able to move into his own apartment thanks to his savings and matched contribution provided through the ILA project. Simon has also reestablished a positive credit rating through the purchase plan on a new computer he acquired recently.

Since joining the ILA program, Simon not only reestablished his positive financial habits, but he found a new career as a computer software instructor. It's a career that he loves and Simon's eyes light up with pride as he shows off the watch his students gave him as a present. He says he can, for the first time in many years, imagine a successful future for himself and he believes teaching and the ILA gave that back to him.

3.4. RETURN ON INVESTMENT

As the findings of this pilot identify that the Toronto model is the preferred ILA model and in light of the fact that Toronto is the location for the country’s largest population of homeless persons and one of the country’s highest cost centers for rental accommodation, project costs associated with the ILA model undertaken in the City of Toronto have been used to calculate a return on investment (ROI) analysis.

In reviewing project costs and calculating a return on investment for this project there are many considerations to be made namely:

1. The financial cost of project set-up, implementation and operations;
2. The matched savings or financial incentive;
3. The associated project benefits that can be quantified;
4. The associated project benefits that cannot be quantified;

Costs to operate this model in Toronto are based on the actual expenses to the project in accordance with the above components. Funding for the project set-up, implementation and operation was received from – the City of Toronto’s Shelter Housing and Support Department and HRSDC’s Housing and Homelessness Branch. Funds utilized for the required matched contribution were received from the City of Toronto, TD Canada Trust and the Toronto Rotary Club. Project costs funded by HRSDC were calculated as a percentage of the total cost to run the project in Edmonton, Fredericton and Toronto.¹⁵

The project costs do not include any research and evaluation costs or the full cost for the project MIS development or operation or the MIS staffing as this was used basically as a research tool. It is important to note that the per capita costs are based upon the 111 participants enrolled within the Toronto shelters 82 of whom opened accounts.

Item	Site Costs	Per Capita Costs
Site Administration ¹⁶	\$ 73,983	\$ 667
SEDI Staff and Overhead ¹⁷	\$ 62,500	\$ 563
Matched Contributions ¹⁸	<u>\$ 71,569</u>	<u>\$1,169.00</u>
Total	\$208,052	\$2,399.00
Participant Savings¹⁹	\$ 29,335	\$ 328

¹⁵ Figures were derived from a calculation representing 66 per cent of the total project cost incurred.

¹⁶ Site administration includes the costs that were associated with the project set-up, implementation and operation at each of the four shelters. This includes, staffing costs for orientation, training of trainers for the financial capability facilitation, recruitment of participants, case management, data collection, cash-out administration and associated project overhead costs.

¹⁷ SEDP’s costs include project management, a portion of the MIS costs (although this was prorated as the MIS was mainly used as a research tool) project tool development including curriculum development and training, operations manual development, project communications and administration.

¹⁸ This was based on the average matched contribution cashed out by participants.

¹⁹ Total participant savings represents both matchable and unmatched savings (above permitted match). The per capita savings represents the average matched and unmatched saved.

When one reviews the site financial capability delivery costs and administration fees it is reasonable to conclude that this investment allowed the project to operate in four shelters, assisted 111 participants for over a year and produced 82 savings accounts – ultimately enabling 50, or 61 per cent, of the participants, who opened savings accounts, to move out of transitional housing into more appropriate and affordable housing. In fact, 70 per cent of the project costs were used to support the functioning of the community-based shelters and the participants in the form of assistance to secure more appropriate housing and a self-sufficient future.

The total per capita cost is an important figure to consider when seeking to review the cost of providing these tools while the individual, or perhaps the family, is living within the transitional housing facility. This project cost can be defined as a true social investment when one considers that the per capita cost of \$2,400 significantly reduced the time the participant remained in the transitional housing facility. To understand this situation fully one must consider the cost of housing the participants within these shelters. The per diem cost of housing and related supports within these four shelters ranges from \$39 to \$77.²⁰ The average stay in the shelters is between nine months to a year.²¹ If we take an average of these figures we arrive at \$58 a day for 10.5 months. The cost therefore on average to house a potential ILA participant within one of the shelters is approximately \$1,740 a month (30 days) or \$18,270 for the average stay.

The data collected to date indicates that 78 per cent of those who successfully completed the program and cashed out had exactly six active savings months. This indicates that the ILA could be a useful tool to combine with existing programmatic attributes and assist with individuals and families exiting earlier from the shelter system.

In terms of recidivism, obviously this project cannot assess the costs associated with that occurrence. However there would be substantial cost savings should the ILA participants not return to the shelter.

When further considering the qualitative benefits of the financial capability and matched savings tools it is clear that this project successfully encouraged persons in transitional housing to change their savings behaviour and to contribute to their own self-sufficiency. This project also allowed for personal savings and a matched incentive to enable a less stressful re-entry into the private housing market. In addition, the project successfully taught participants the benefits of a systematic approach to saving. The benefits of these tools are difficult to quantify and the resources of this project will not permit this in-depth study to be undertaken. However, it is clear that the value of these tools and lessons could be measured in terms of quality of life, well-being and self-sufficiency. Future impacts could also be measured for these individuals and families including the intergenerational effect of savings and goal setting, education achievement, health effects, employment, income and financial capability etc. This also supports the case for additional longitudinal research that should be

²⁰ This information has been provided by the management staff at each of the transitional housing facilities.

²¹ This information has been given by the management staff at the shelters however all have cautioned that average stays vary greatly and could extend longer than the time identified in many cases due to personal circumstances. In addition, it is unknown how many of these residence are repeat shelter users.

undertaken with participants of the ILA to see how they have fared since cashing out of the project.

It should be noted that this model and the costs associated with it were largely dependant upon the capacity and knowledge that SEDI provided to the project design, partner recruitment and implementation. In addition existing site infrastructure at the local sites provided an opportunity to lower some of the expected overhead costs.

However it is important to note that this model is not what the project research recommends if rolled-out on a larger scale. In accordance with the key project findings a larger scale program would require a longer and more flexible time frame aligned with the needs and life circumstances of project participants and the shelter's service provision. This would have implications for overhead and staff costs. However, this could also mean that a higher success rate could result.

In terms of determining the return on investment for a larger field application there are factors to be considered namely:

1. The design (permitted uses, match rate, savings period etc.) and scale (how many sites and participants) to be used;
2. The timelines within which the project will operate;
3. The financial costs of project set-up, implementation and operation;
4. The required matched contributions based on design and local circumstances;
5. The associated quantifiable project benefits;
6. The associated non quantifiable project benefits;

The costs of the above noted factors would fluctuate within the environments and locations under which a larger scale project would operate. In fact, and it is important to note, that one of the key features of the project implementation is that it builds capacity from the ground up and this capacity is retained within the shelter and its staffing. This can also be viewed as a direct social investment to the community and the homeless population.

The project results clearly indicate that the ILA approach is very promising and can be viewed as an investment approach to assisting the homeless population.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. CONCLUSIONS

Homeless people face a variety of challenges on the road to re-establishing themselves in stable housing. The ability to accumulate first and last month's rent is only one of these challenges. The literature states that, on average, about 30 per cent of homeless persons face serious alcohol, drug abuse, and/or mental health challenges.²² In addition, discrimination based on source of income, amount of income, race, age, presence of young children and even disability limits the options available in some markets.²³ For others, a history of domestic violence and abuse adds the important element of personal safety into the housing decision. The transitional housing providers in our study offered nine to 24 months of secure housing, a small personal needs allowance, and a broad range of additional supports. The ability to have time to heal, to refocus themselves and to learn to trust, were all factors that participants identified as important to their success. The ability to offer this combination of services is vital to the success of an ILA Project or Program.

This report concludes with the following:

- i. **Those living under financially constrained circumstance CAN and DO save when presented with the right incentives and supports.**

The components of this project provided financial incentives to participants at a rate of 2:1 and 3:1 in both the Toronto and Fredericton sites. These incentives and participation in the project resulted in the following:

- 129 participants were enrolled in the project voluntarily;
- Of those participants who opened bank accounts all had very low-incomes and extremely low asset accumulation;
- 44 per cent of the enrolled participants to successfully cash-out of the project and move into a more self-sufficient lifestyle and into appropriate and affordable housing;
- If one considers that out of the participants enrolled in these two sites, 100 savings accounts were opened then the percentage of successful savers jumps to 57 per cent;
- Participants who opened bank accounts, collectively saved over \$33,000 and leveraged almost \$79,000 in matched contributions;
- Participants saved beyond what was required for the project commitment and became reintegrated into the financial services mainstream;
- This project successfully encouraged persons in transitional housing to change their savings behaviour;
- This project allowed for personal savings and a matched incentive to allow a less stressful re-entry into the private housing market; and

²² Ornstein, Michael (2000). "Ethno-Racial Inequality in the City of Toronto: An Analysis on the 1996 Census Data" [Electronic Version], i-ii.

²³ IBID

- This project successfully taught participants the benefits of a systematic approach to saving.
- ii. An ILA project is more likely to be successful when the community partner agency is a transitional housing provider.**

This conclusion is strengthened by the results of our case comparison. In Toronto, where project results were comparably better, all agencies were transitional providers and project conclusions show that this model worked very well and benefited ILA participants greatly. In Fredericton and Edmonton the community partners were not direct housing service providers. In Fredericton, however, the YMCA was able to compensate for their lack of direct contact with transitional housing residents by using a range of methods, including: having access to a street outreach worker who did most of the recruitment for the ILA project. This individual shared an office with the ILA facilitator and was in constant contact with the project participants; maintaining an organizational commitment to the ILA and seeing the project as an important part of their service model. Thus resources in support of the project were available as needed. Thus, while the Fredericton ILA model was administratively cumbersome, it did work well and also benefited participants greatly. Unfortunately, the same success was not found in Edmonton, where these additional elements were absent or did not function as well, resulting in a less successful pilot.

Overall, results have shown that the success of an ILA should not and cannot be dependent on an organized cluster of supports entirely external to the project.

- iii. The matched savings component is central to both the marketing of the ILA and is a key feature to assisting with savings towards first and last months rent.**

The majority of participants were drawn to this project by the offering of the matched incentive and a strong interest in learning why and how to save for future goals. The matched credits provided a strong incentive to do so and a practical solution to the hurdle of accumulating first and last months rent or damage deposits. Consistent messaging by the case managers however was required. The fact that participants took responsibility for opening their own accounts added to the outcomes of self-sufficiency and confidence.

Courses in Fredericton and Toronto integrated a structured savings approach into the Financial Capability Training course delivery. An ongoing effort to support participants and reinforce the requirement for consistent savings is essential to the successfully gaining the matched savings component. In contrast, the Edmonton portion of the project did not properly integrate the matched savings component into their course delivery, nor were case managers actively monitoring the participant's savings behaviour.

- iv. The facilitator's methods of presenting the Financial Capability Training contribute to the success of a participant within this project. This project component needs to be flexible enough to accommodate the learning needs and capabilities of different client groups.**

Personal attention to individual needs of participants has an impact on interest in the project and ultimate success in the project. Good facilitators and case managers can make a difference in project success.

The varying success rates indicate that FCT courses must be adaptable to accommodate the demographic characteristics and life experiences of ILA participants. In Fredericton and Toronto, there was a lower success rate among younger participants (18 to 25) and females. Edmonton experienced difficulties when the ECLF attempted to work with newcomers to Canada.

v. The ILA must incorporate a flexible savings period and cash-out time frame that is aligned with the needs and life circumstances of project participants.

A rigid project or programmatic deadline does not always coincide with the participant preparedness to look for private market rental housing. Individuals recovering from substance abuse and domestic violence may require longer stays in transitional housing before they are ready to live on their own.

If the matched savings is accommodated within a time frame that will allow for proper attainment of the financial capability training, effective case management and personal savings many more participants will not only be able to avail themselves of the services offered within the transitional housing agency, but they will also be able to benefit from the ILA project components as well – in a way that fits their skill development and ultimate independence.

vi. ILA project partnerships are a significant variable in assisting with the successes of participants.

This project was successful due in large part to the nature of the relationships between project partners and their dedication to communicate with prospective ILA participants prior to project design and once the project was underway. These relationships included consulting people in transitional housing about the project design to ensure relevance and most importantly those who worked directly with the participant group during enrollment, the provision of case management and FCT services and assisting with participant cash-outs. In addition, having receptive and respectful staff at the partnering financial institution was key to providing participants with the assurances they need to continue their relationship in the economic mainstream after they left the project.

It should also be noted that the funding partnership for this project was significant in that it spanned all levels of government, it included financial institutions, charitable organizations, a union and a strong contribution from community based organizations. This signifies the relative importance of the issues surrounding this project to those across a wide spectrum and the wide-ranging support to provide practical, workable solutions to the issues of homelessness.

In addition there was recognition that the research component of this project was a significant contribution that could bridge the gap between policy and practice. Through the

participation in the research, Funders as well as to Community Partners and participants recognized the importance of findings that could influence future policy and a possible expansion of a successful pilot to assist those in need.

vii. Additional information may be required to fully assess the efficacy of this approach.

Unfortunately funding was not available for follow-up research with successful ILA participants who cashed-out, moved into more appropriate housing and started on their journey to self-sufficiency. It will be important to identify the sustainability or the longer-term impacts of the ILA components on participants especially in relation to recidivism (returning to transitional housing), their future savings behaviour and their economic and social circumstances. This longer-term research could answer questions pertaining to the cycle of poverty and why individuals and families return to shelters for housing support.

4.2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The ILA is a sound concept that warrants expansion. In order to maximize the learning's from this project the following is recommended:

1. That the Federal Government Department of Human Resources Development Canada recognize the positive outcomes of this pilot project and investigate options that would allow the incorporation of the Independent Living Account Project as a new tool available to urban and rural centres across Canada where homelessness is an issue;
2. That the Provincial governments recognize the importance of asset-building for Social Assistant Recipients and provide a waiver for participation in such projects without penalty to benefits;
3. That the Federal Government Department of Human Resources Development Canada recognize that additional research is needed to determine the long-term/broader impacts of the ILA project benefits on those participants who successfully cashed out of the project. Federal Funding for this research should be provided as soon as possible.

There is no better way to sum up this report's recommendations than with a quote from one of the Toronto ILA participants, Fred Green:²⁴

“This project was a springboard and it caught me on the way down. I never thought about banking or even how important saving really is. No one ever invested in me before and that is what really made the difference. Everyone living like me should have the same opportunity.”

²⁴ Fred Green is 45 years old Aboriginal Canadian and was a resident of Fort York Residences in Toronto. He recently completed the ILA project requirements and cashed-out to move into the private rental market.

5. APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: SOURCES OF INCOME

ILA Project applicants will be asked to report the total income, from all sources, of all adult (aged 18 and older) members of their family for the calendar year of application and the year immediately previous to that.

The definition of total income is based on the income that would be included in the amount reported on line 150 of a personal income tax return. The following is a complete list of these income sources:

- Employment income
- Commissions
- Other employment income (such as foreign employment income, net research grants and wage-loss replacement plans)
- Old Age Security pension amounts
- Canada or Quebec Pension Plan benefits (including payments for disability)
- Other pension or superannuation amounts
- Employment Insurance benefits
- Taxable dividends
- Net partnership income for limited or non-active partners
- Net rental income
- Taxable capital gains
- Support payments (e.g. alimony and child support) up to the LICO cut-off for the family size.
- RRSP income
- Other income (such as scholarships or grants over \$500, severance pay, lump-sum payments received when leaving a pension plan and death benefits)
- Net self-employment income (including net business income, net professional income, net commission income, net fishing income and net farming income)
- Worker's Compensation benefits
- Social assistance payments (including disability benefits and Ontario Works supplements)
- Net federal supplements
- Interest earned on invested income from lump sum payment such as lottery winnings, gifts and inheritances.

APPENDIX 2: SITE COMPARISON CHART

	Edmonton	Toronto	Fredericton
Match Rate	3:1	3:1	2:1
Savings Goal(s)	damage deposits; moving expenses / overdue utility payments	first/last month's rent apt. insurance / utility hook-up	First month's rent / damage deposit / apt. insurance / utility hook-up
Personal Savings Available MC	\$180 \$540	\$400 \$1,200	\$500 \$1,000
Total	\$720	\$1,600	\$1,500
Savings Period	min. 6 months within 12 month savings period <i>(savings period could be longer if more funding available)</i>	min. 6 months within savings period timeframe <i>(varies depending on when participant enters project)</i>	min. 6 months within savings period timeframe <i>(varies depending on when participant enters project)</i>
Min. Monthly Savings	pre-determined by / with participant prior to starting project	\$10	\$10
Max. Monthly Savings		\$150	\$150
FCT	12 sessions (16 hours)	5 sessions (Approx. 15 hours)	5 sessions (Approx. 12-14 hours)
Mandatory?	Yes	Yes	Yes
# of Accounts	69	111	18

APPENDIX 3: PARTNER DESCRIPTIONS

SEDI

SEDI (Social and Enterprise Development Innovations) is a national charitable organization dedicated to enabling poor, unemployed and under-employed people to become self-sufficient. SEDI works in areas such as policy development, project management, information exchange, capacity building, public education and research.

Fredericton

In Fredericton, the smallest of the urban areas, the participating agency is the Fredericton YMCA. This agency was chosen because of an ongoing relationship with SEDI's *learn\$ave* project and the compatibility of the ILA with other programs and initiatives that were in place at the YMCA.

The YMCA dedicated a specific contract position, the ILA Facilitator, to this project. The Fredericton site was responsible for the recruitment of about 20 participants. It soon became apparent that there were few transitional houses in Fredericton, specifically that the definition of transitional housing does not match well the homeless population in Fredericton. The eligibility requirements were adapted to allow for individuals who would qualify for transitional housing to be included in the research sample at this site.

Toronto

SEDI partnered with four agencies in Toronto. All are transitional housing providers. The Agencies are: Fort York an adult all male facility; Eva's Phoenix, a mixed gender youth facility, and Amelie House and St Clare's, two homes run by the Society of St Vincent de Paul, which serve adult women. This selection offered an opportunity to assess how the ILA functioned for a variety of client populations, administrative, and funding arrangements.

Unlike the YMCA in Fredericton which dedicated a specific position to this project, the Toronto sites assigned primary responsibility for the project to specific staff. However, in all cases the ILA project represented only part of their daily work responsibilities. The Toronto sites in combination were responsible for 111 participants, the largest enrollment among the three regions. The breakdown of Toronto's participants is:

	Amelie House	Eva's Phoenix	Fort York	St. Clare's	Total
Participants	14	31	57	9	111
% of Toronto Participants	13%	28%	51%	8%	100%

The types of services each transitional housing provider had are:

Eva's Phoenix	Fort York	St. Clare's	Amelie House
Psychiatric Health Care Clothing Counseling	Psychiatric Legal Food Banks	Employment Centre Medical Psychiatric A.A. Meetings Support Workers C.O.D.A.	Medical/Dental/Optical Legal Assistance Employment Centre Transportation Counseling Cltothing

Edmonton

In Edmonton ILA project was administered by the Edmonton Community Loan Fund (ECLF), a community-based organization providing capital and assistance to socially responsible projects intended to improve the economic self-reliance and quality of life for low-income individuals, families and neighbourhoods in the Edmonton region. The ECLC was responsible for forming partnerships with local transitional housing providers for the purpose of delivering the ILA project. The ECLF employed independent facilitators who were responsible for presenting the Financial Capability Training courses. The Edmonton Housing Trust Fund participated in the project as the Funder for the matched savings portion of the project.

APPENDIX 4: LITERATURE REVIEW

The following brief literature review, which was included in more depth in the related Methodology Report, provides some background and context to the research that was undertaken for this project in the areas of asset-building, transitional housing, and financial capability.

Asset-Based Social Policy

The ILA Project's methodology is rooted in an emerging area of social policy and practice that has come to be understood as *asset-building*. Its central idea is that opportunities to save and invest in a better future are as critical as income in overcoming poverty and promoting well-being. This concept was originated by Dr. Michael Sherraden, Director of the Center for Social Development, Washington University in St. Louis Missouri and is outlined in his book, *Assets and the Poor*.²⁵ Dr. Sherraden believes that when individuals have access to savings and assets and to supportive services they may be better equipped to manage life transitions and to build and maintain self-sufficiency. A growing body of evidence supports the thesis that, when provided the right supports, low-income individuals can and do save. Evaluated asset-based projects to date have typically been geared towards the working poor. Research questions, pertaining to the efficacy of the approach when applied to individuals who are dealing with issues of homelessness and life transitions, spurred SEDI to conceive the Independent Living Account (ILA) to determine whether individuals living in transitional housing would benefit from the same types of asset-building projects as other low-income and working poor individuals do.

Recently in Canada, there has been relevant policy research done in the asset-building field. SEDI has been the leader in applying the concept to different areas of social policy practices, including adult learning, immigrant settlement, aboriginal affairs and homeownership.²⁶ Several good background pieces, which have been published by the Policy Research Initiative, are also available.²⁷ In addition, the Social and Research Demonstration Corporation has produced an evaluation of the state of research around asset building in its 'Learning What Works' newsletter²⁸ and Andrew Jackson, an economist with the Canada Labour Congress, has provided a critical perspective on asset building.²⁹

²⁵ Sherraden, Michael. 1991. *Assets and the Poor: A New American Welfare Policy*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc.

²⁶ See www.sedi.org

²⁷ For materials related to a PRI asset building conference, please see http://policyresearch.gc.ca/page.asp?pagenm=asset_based. For overview articles, see http://policyresearch.gc.ca/page.asp?pagenm=asset_based and

²⁸ http://www.srdc.org/english/publications/volume_5_number_1-en.pdf

²⁹ <http://www.caledoninst.org/Publications/Detail/?ID=452>

The concept of asset-building resonates in the context of public policy because:

- Assets are an integral part of any broad development plan.
- It acknowledges the integration of social and economic policy.
- It is interventionist in that public funds are strategically used to support the participation of low-income people in the marketplace.
- It builds human and community capacity to plan ahead and weather difficult times.
- It complements existing safety net approaches. In fact, after five years of exploration we are convinced that asset-building
- It has significant public policy potential and merits further concerted investigation.

If asset-building is going to take root in Canada, it will because of the need to find solutions to problems that the current safety net alone has not been able to address. For example:

- One in eight school-aged children in Canada live in a household with a very low annual income. According to UNICEF, Canada has one of the worst child poverty rates among sixteen industrialized nations.³⁰
- Between 1984 and 1999, the income and wealth of Canada's homeowners increased dramatically and that of renters decreased. Homeowner's wealth increased from being 29 times that of renters in 1984 to 70 times that of renters in 1999.³¹
- Many Canadians, particularly those with low incomes and poor quality employment, are effectively excluded from the semi-private system of retirement savings.³² This same semi-private system now accounts for a significant and growing portion of retirement income among older Canadians.
- Young Canadians from low-income families are two and a half times less likely to go on to college or university. Meanwhile roughly 40% of all jobs in Canada now require 16 years of education.³³

These and other indications of social and economic exclusion are already motivating Canadian policymakers to seek new approaches and solutions. It is in this context that SEDI is working to further explore and develop an asset-building policy agenda.

Assets can take different forms. For most households, the largest asset is equity in a home. But other forms of assets such as retirement savings, stocks and bonds or cash in a savings account are also important contributors to financial security. Assets can also take the form of intellectual assets, such as post secondary education and training, or they may form the capital for business and employment, such as equipment and property. In their varied forms, assets all contribute to social and human capital. Their presence is associated with household stability, economic well-being and civic engagement. Their absence is associated with higher

³⁰Canadian Council on Social Development (2001) "the Progress of Canada's Children 2001".

³¹ Statistics Canada (2001): Survey of Financial Security

³² Canadian Council on Social Development (1994) "The Road to Retirement". Statistics Canada (2001)

³³ "Participation in Post Secondary Education and Family Income" The Daily, December 7, 2001.

risks of poverty, exclusion and disenfranchisement. The very act of saving itself seems to have powerful social and psychological impacts, enhancing a sense of empowerment and capacity.

The state of asset-building in Canada as an approach to poverty alleviation is, as yet, only a promising idea, not yet a public policy. However, Canada already has in place several measures to promote the accumulation of savings and assets from private retirement savings to life-long learning savings plans and homeownership. Federal and provincial governments spend billions to assist middle and upper income earners to save largely through non-refundable tax credits.

Transitional Housing and the Housing Continuum

In Canada, homelessness services traditionally have been designed to follow the “continuum of care” model that involve three types of housing supports namely emergency shelters, transitional housing and permanent housing. The continuum model requires that participants move through the different levels of support in an attempt to reintegrate homeless or at risk population into more mainstream markets.

Transitional housing is key to this integration effort. As defined by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation³⁴, transitional housing is as an intermediate step between emergency crisis shelter and permanent housing. It is more long-term, service-intensive, and private than emergency shelters, yet remains time-limited to stays of three months to three years. It is meant to provide a safe, supportive environment where residents can overcome trauma, begin to address the issues that lead to homelessness or kept them homeless, and begin to rebuild their support network.

Program models range from medical treatment to community economic development. They tend to cluster at the ends of a continuum from service-intensive facilities with rigorous expectations of residents (“high demand” programs) to programs with flexible requirements and optional services (“low demand”). Transitional housing is distinguished from supportive housing primarily in its length of residency – supportive housing is permanent. Groups who have reportedly benefited from transitional housing include:

- Those who are recovering from traumas;
- Those who have a background of multi-generational poverty and lack a supportive social network;
- Emancipated youth, or adults coming from institutions with little or no independent living experience;
- Young mothers and pregnant teenagers;
- Immigrants;
- Those needing education and job skills; or
- Those who have on-going service needs due to mental or physical health problems or disabilities, addictions, or are HIV positive.

³⁴ CMHC Research Highlights, Socio-Economic Series 04-017, *Transitional Housing, Objectives, Indicators of Success and Outcomes*.

The overall objective of transitional housing is to provide people with the structure and support they need to address critical issues necessary to maintain permanent housing and maximize self-sufficiency. At minimum, it is hoped that project ‘graduates’ will not use the emergency shelter system or become homeless again³⁵.

According to CMHC, programs vary in their demands and expectations of residents according to the subgroup served, how barriers to stable housing are conceived, and how those barriers can be practically overcome. This is reflected in eligibility criteria, the extent and rigidity of rules and restrictions, and the basis for involuntary program discharges. Programs that focus on behavioural change or treatment usually mandate participation in daily program activities and require applicants to demonstrate motivation. Programs that focus on access to services are more flexible about program compliance, more forgiving, and less structured. This is not unlike the transitional housing facilities used for this study in Toronto or by the community partners in both Edmonton and Fredericton.

These supports can be effective but they are usually limited by the amount of time that the individual can stay in their respective transitional houses. Often, once individuals leave these facilities, they must be able to fend for themselves financially in the housing market. Transitional housing is best coupled with supportive permanent housing and community support services to help participants reintegrate. While this is desirable, a scarcity of affordable supportive units and a shortage of funds for post exit supports make this a difficult task.

As well, the income of the poor and working poor to finance accommodation is not keeping pace with the increasing cost of adequate, affordable housing across the country. This may affect individuals living in transitional housing more because they are often without a substantive earnings history, have credit problems, and lack a substantive housing history. These multiple barriers often make the transition out of transitional housing difficult and may increase the likelihood of individuals remaining improperly housed or returning to the emergence shelter system.

The ILA Project focuses on people that are living in transitional housing. A review of some of the literature that describes these populations provides an appropriate context for decisions made about the methodology selected for this project. An examination of this work shows that over the past two decades, research and related literature has evolved. First came the set of definitional and methodological issues around producing accurate counts of the homeless population (Hombs and Snyder, 1982; Baxter and Hopper, 1982; Hopper, Susser, and Conover, 1985; Rossi, Fisher and Willis 1986; Rossi Wright and Fisher, 1987; US GAO, 1988; Burnam and Koegel, 1988; Burt and Cohen, 1989; Rossi, 1989, 1991; Burt, 1991; Shlay and Rossi 1992;). Next came literature that focused on characteristics (Burt and Cohen, 1989; Koegel and Burnham, 1988, Wong, 1995,1997; Wong, Culhane and Kuhn, 1997; Wong and Piliavin, 1997). Most recently, access to large administrative databases has allowed the proliferation of detailed, research focused on the evaluation of policies introduced in the 1980s and 1990s.

³⁵ Ibid

Findings and discussions in both the academic and the non-academic literature produced by agencies which provide services primarily to homeless persons allow us to group factors related to homelessness into the following kinds of conceptual categories and help to locate this study within the broader literature on homelessness³⁶.

- Generic precipitating factors such as housing affordability and availability; poverty-based homelessness, related to unemployment or under-employment; the feminization of poverty; the over-representation of single mothers among the poor; and systemic/structural discrimination;
- Individual precipitating factors like domestic violence and family breakdown;
- Changes in public policy around income and social support, eligibility requirements, removal of rent control, downloading of social housing and withdrawal from the provision of new social housing, immigration, and access to services by refugees;
- Transitional housing availability and the challenges its forms and their availability pose for maintaining traditional family structures;
- Resources (individual, family and community) that support migrants and refugees, as well as the stressors these groups face when they are estranged from family and friends and do not have access to “institutionally complete communities,” which could mitigate the impacts of these deficits.

Yet another literature grouping derives from programs that attempt to move families back into stable housing. Examples of this material can be found in descriptions of programs like “Streets to Homes” in Toronto as well as and “Homes First for Families” and “Beyond Shelter” in the United States.

The common philosophy behind the diverse set of programs is simple: The primary need for homeless people is permanent housing. These programs place families as quickly as possible in permanent housing and then provide intensive home-based case management and stabilizing support services to prevent a recurrence of homelessness. By helping participants become housed and connected to mainstream services these programs, used together, can help prevent homeless people from entering or help them rapidly exit the homeless service system. This multi-faceted approach is reminiscent of the elements traditionally included in a continuum of care program style that focuses on:

- Identifying with an individual or family their needs and cultural sensitivities and then connecting them to facilities and services;
- Appropriate supportive and preventative services;
- Immediate (emergency) housing as a safe, healthy alternative to the streets;
- Transitional housing;
- Long term housing or long term supportive housing arrangements; and, Community awareness programs

³⁶ Please see Springer and Kilbride, *Forging Links, Building Social Capital: Responding to Migration as a Factor in Emergency Shelter Use*, Ryerson University, Oct 2003.

Finally, there is an emerging literature that addresses the issues of financial capability, case management support, and matched savings as applied to programs that serve homeless people.

A financial capability course, individual case management, monitoring of, and support for, the saving progress as well as peer support groups provide additional strength to encourage and support successful participation in the savings program. It is this specific combination that is the focus of the pilot.

Financial Capability

Financial Capability is a new policy term SEDI introduced to Canada in 2004. It has been derived from the term financial literacy however it is only now beginning to get defined and operationalized. SEDI has attempted to do so in two separate publications both published by the Government of Canada's Policy Research Initiative (PRI).³⁷ In its most recent publication *Financial Capability Matters* SEDI, the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada (FCAC) and the PRI call for an enabling environment for financial capability which would ensure that all Canadians develop the skills and confidence to be aware of financial opportunities, to know where to go for help, to make informed choices, and to take effective action to improve their financial well-being.

Financial Capability recognizes that the ability to make informed financial decisions is essential for basic functioning in Canadian society. These decisions range from simple daily spending and budgeting to choices of insurance, banking, or investment products, to saving for retirement, home ownership, and post-secondary education. They have profound implications on the financial security, well-being, and prosperity of individuals and families. More financially capable citizens would be better equipped to take advantage of opportunities and would both increase their access to, and make more informed judgments about, goods and services provided by financial institutions and governments.

At the local level, several organizations and pilot projects have gained important insights into the dynamics of financial capability. SEED Winnipeg, Lutherwood in Kitchener, and the Mennonite Central Committee in Calgary are not-for-profit organizations that have incorporated financial capability training into their mandate and offer services to different low-income populations, usually in concert with matched savings projects. They have developed and delivered curriculums for a variety of target audiences within their communities. St. Christopher House in Toronto provides financial problem solving and assistance in preparing tax returns for its clients. Through this work, it has developed some concrete policy recommendations with its Community Understanding Social Policy (CUSP) program. This has resulted in several informative and innovative social policy papers by Richard Shillington and John Stapleton. SEDI, in partnership with the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation, is testing the effectiveness of financial capability training in the *learn\$ave* project, an asset-building micro-enterprise and adult learning pilot funded by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. Ten sites across Canada have trained financial capability facilitators as a result of this project. The final results of this randomized

³⁷ Both papers are available at www.sedi.org.

research will be available in 2009, though implementation publications have already been released.

There are also competing definitions of financial capability in Canada as shown in ‘Why Financial Capability Matters’. Garry Rabbior, President of the Canadian Foundation for Economic Education, defined economic capability as “developing the knowledge and skills, relevant to one’s society that enables a person to undertake life’s economic decisions and actions with confidence and competence.” While personal financial capability remains a core component of this approach, economic capability also includes notions of economic citizenship and reference to the need for a better understanding of how macro-economic and micro-economic forces and the labour market relate to daily life and decisions. Robert Duvall, President of the National Council on Economic Education (United States), expressed the idea of economic citizenship by using a simple definition of capability as “the ability to read and understand the front page of the newspaper.” In a more expansive form, David Dodge, Governor of the Bank of Canada, has stated that economic education can result in “better citizens, capable of making reasonable judgments on public policy issues that have a bearing on their personal prospects and those of the nation.” Economic capability programs usually aim to improve and expand economic education through the primary and secondary school system.

Internationally, both the United States and the United Kingdom have begun developing more comprehensive approaches to financial capability in their respective countries. These efforts detailed in “Why Financial Capability Matters.” A broader look at international financial capability strategies is available through the OECD.³⁸

³⁸ Smith, Barbara. 2005. Improving Financial Literacy: Analysis of Issues and Policies. OECD. November.

APPENDIX 5: KEY INFORMANT PROTOCOL

Introduction

Hello, my name is _____ (name) _____. I am a member of a research team that is evaluating the Independent Living Accounts (ILA) pilot project. We are talking with other service professionals among our community partners to learn more about how this project worked, and the impacts on both individual participants and transitional housing partners.

In September 2004, SEDI was awarded the contract from the National Secretariat on Homelessness (NSH) to administer the research behind a small-scale ILA demonstration project.

The project is being funded the National Secretariat on Homelessness and is being coordinated by a team of researchers from Ryerson University and the administering agency SEDI (Social and Enterprise Development Innovations).

Before we begin, let me remind you that you can stop the process at any time if you feel uncomfortable with the information requested. We will keep the identities of all of our respondents anonymous, and data will be reported in such form in the final report as to preserve your anonymity.

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. The survey should take approximately thirty minutes....may we begin?

Section 1: Background Information

This series of questions are designed to provide us with background information on your agency.

1. *May I have your name?*
2. *May I have your official title?*
3. *What is the full name of your organization?*
4. *What type of organization is this?*
 - Municipal Agency?* _____
 - Non-Government Agency primary serving the homeless?* _____
 - Non-Government Agency primarily serving immigrants/ refugees?* _____
 - Faith-based Non-Government Agency primarily?* _____

Other (if so, describe) _____

5. *Could you briefly describe the services that your organization offers to the homeless or those at risk of becoming homeless? If this information already exists as part of a written document, could you please provide us with a copy?*

Section 2: Characteristics of Clients and Their Vulnerability to Homelessness

I would like to ask you to provide general profile of your typical clients. This information will be used to compare the characteristics of your ILA participants with those you commonly encounter.

Could you give me a general profile of your typical client?

Wait for an answer but make sure that the informant addresses each of the following categories.

FOLLOW UP

- a) *Gender of the typical client*
- b) *Age range of the typical client*
- c) *Racial status. Visible minority or majority group member?*
- d) *Ethnicity. List the most common ethnic groups.
Immigrant status, i.e. refugee, refugee claimants, permanent residents, without status*
- e) *English language proficiency.
Do they understand / speak / read / write English?*
- f) *Typical level of education*
- g) *Typical level of health. Describe most common health problems.*
- h) *Typical employment status. Full time / part time / unemployed?*
- i) *Typical occupation. List the most common types.*

Are there any organizations that typically route clients to your agency?
If so, could you list these agencies?

Wait for an answer but use the following probes if the informant is unclear about the question.

FOLLOW UP

- a) *Any government health & welfare agencies?*
- b) *Any other shelter or emergency housing agencies?*
- c) *Any other types of agencies? (If so have them describe)*

How do most clients find out about your agency’s services?

Wait for an answer but use the following probes if the informant is unclear about the question.

FOLLOW UP

- a) *Do they walk in directly from the street?*
- b) *Were they referred by other shelter users?*
- c) *Were they referred by friends or family (who are not shelter users)?*
- d) *Were they referred by other service agencies?*

In general, what factors do you consider contribute to people becoming homeless or being at risk of being homeless?

[Probe: family size, family structure, language fluency, number of dependents etc.]

By the time a client seeks transitional housing – what other housing options have they typically exhausted?

- a) *What services do clients receive from other organizations?*

Check all that apply

- *Housing assistance* _____
- *Ontario Works (Work fare)* _____
- *Employment Insurance* _____
- *Health Care* _____
- *Child Care* _____
- *Job Placement or Training* _____
- *Transportation Assistance* _____
- *Personal Counseling* _____

- (Individual / Family / Marriage)* _____
- Mental Health Counseling or Assistance* _____
- *Legal Assistance* _____
- *Food Bank* _____
- *Clothing* _____
- *Anything else (describe)* _____
- *Anything else (describe)* _____
- *Anything else (describe)* _____

How do you follow-up with your clients after they leave your shelter and are no longer using your services?

Where do most clients go after they either leave the shelter or are no longer using your services?

Wait for an answer but use the following probes if the informant is unclear about the question.

FOLLOW UP

- a) *They go right back to the street?*
- b) *They usually go to another non-government shelter service?*
- c) *They move into public housing?*
- d) *They go back to live with their family or friends?*
- e) *They acquire their own privately owned or rented residence?*
- f) *Some other destination (If so, have the informant describe)*

Could you give me your best guess as to why this is the most common destination for clients? Why is this question pertinent to the project?

[Wait for an answer, but direct the informant toward the following options if they need additional direction or clarification.]

FOLLOW UP

Check all that apply

- *Sharing a living space with friends or family* _____
- *Living on the street* _____

- *Single room occupancy shelter service* _____
 - *City shelter* _____
 - *Any other shelter option (if so, describe)* _____
 - *Any other shelter option (if so, describe)* _____
-

Section 3: Project Impact

The primary goal of the ILA demonstration project is to provide persons living within transitional housing facilities with a mix of financial and training incentives as a means of facilitating their entry into the mainstream housing and rental markets.

Based on what you know about your clients, do you feel that ILA helps them address the issues they most frequently confront in their search for stable, affordable housing?

Does the ILA project assist the poor and working poor to generate savings/wealth? Why or why not? Please offer specific examples if possible.

Does the ILA project assist the poor and working poor to improve their understanding of how to manage their money? Why or why not? Please offer specific examples if possible.

How important is a strong community administered case management process for persons living within transitional housing who have a desire to move into the private rental market?

How important are the matched financial incentives?

How important is the financial literacy training?

If you had to rank the major elements of the project on the basis of importance to the participant's needs in what order would you arrange the following:

- Case management
- Matched financial incentives
- Financial literacy
- Other

Section 4: Reflections on the ILA Project

How is the ILA project managed at this agency?

(Probe for the structural elements of Management)

Can you give me a frank assessment of what it took to achieve “buy in” to the ILA pilot by your agency staff and management? I am particularly interested in how this project matches your client group and the mission and mandate of your agency.

Can you reflect on significant challenges of the ILA implementation in your agency?

(Probe: administration issues, working with partner agencies, recruitment, and retention)

What do you see as the notable project successes to date?

What kinds of project challenges did/ do you face?

How would you characterize your agency’s relationship with SEDI? How has SEDI worked with you to build on successes and reduce challenges?

Do you think this project should be expanded in scale? Why or why not and if so do you have any suggestions on how it should be expanded?

Can you provide some examples of best practices that can be carried forward into future versions of an ILA project?

Can you offer suggestions for improvements to the project?

Are there any other issues related to the ILA project that we have not been addressed that you would like to mention?

APPENDIX 6: FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

Introduction

Hello, I am _____ (name) _____. I am a member of a team of researchers from Ryerson University that is evaluating the Independent Living Accounts (ILA) pilot project. We are talking with a number of persons who participated in the ILA project to learn more about how the program worked for them, what benefits were most important, the reasons why they are using transitional housing and how the ILA responded to their service needs.

Confidentiality: What you say in this focus group will not be made known to others – not to other residents, or your family members. Only the Principal investigators, Dr. Springer, Dr Webber, and their research colleagues will be able to look at the responses. When the study is written up, no names will be mentioned and there will be enough people in the study that people reading the results of the study will not be able to know who said what. Participants have an obligation to respect the privacy of the other members of the group by not disclosing any personal information that they share during the focus group discussion. With your permission, I would like to record the session. This is simply to ensure that our written notes are accurate and reflect what you told us. The tapes and transcription will be destroyed after the study is completed in August 2006.

Each of you will be asked to sign or initial a consent form. This procedure is entirely for your protection. It ensures that you have been informed of your rights, that you understand them and that your participation is entirely voluntary.

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. The focus group session should take approximately 1 1/2 hours. As a token of our appreciation for your help with this evaluation we will pay you a stipend forty dollars.

Before we begin let me remind you once again that you can stop the process at any time if you feel uncomfortable.

LEARNING ABOUT THE ILA PROJECT

I would like to talk first about how you learned about the ILA project. I am especially interested in:

1. How you found out about it (word of mouth, shelter staff, flyers, etc)
2. What was your initial response to the idea?
(Interest, skepticism, worry that it was a way to manipulate you, gratitude that there was help available)
3. At the time what was your personal situation?
4. How was your response to the program affected by your personal circumstances?

EXPERIENCES WITH THE ILA PROJECT

We would like to hear about your experiences with the ILA project.

5. What was the process that led you to take part in the project?
6. Did you discuss the idea with others and if so what was the outcome of this?
7. What did you think about the necessity of “going to class”?
8. Did you consider help with money management and saving important **before** you attended the first training session?
9. In your view, did the ILA money management training contain helpful information?
10. Would you change the information provided in any way?
11. What were the most important things that you learned?
12. After the training do you feel comfortable interacting with:
 - a. A bank on your own?
 - b. A Landlord on your own?
 - c. Other?
13. What did it feel like having money/savings in the bank?
14. What kinds of help from the agency did you consider most important?
15. After the training did you encourage anyone else to join the project? Why?

FINANCIAL AND HOUSING EXPERIENCES

We would like to know if the ILA project improved your housing situation

16. Have you cashed out?
17. Has your housing situation changed since entering the project, how?
18. How did ILA help you to find housing outside the shelter?
19. How did the landlord respond to you?
20. Was this different from previous times?
21. Is there a difference between the housing you found after the ILA project and what you found before? If yes, please explain.

22. Has better housing reduced the challenges you face in other areas?

CHALLENGES WITH SAVING

We are interested in finding out your experience with the savings during the ILA project.

23. Do you feel you were able to save successfully in this project, why or why not?
24. What do you remember as the most difficult part about saving?
25. How difficult was it to set money aside given all the things you needed NOW?
26. was there concern about “getting your money”?
27. Did the banking process make the saving process easy or more difficult? How?
28. Did the agency make the saving process easy or more difficult? How?
29. Were there times you thought of walking away from the project? What helped you hang on until the end of the course?
30. What do you see as the most important things that you will keep from this experience?
31. Tell us about the things you learned that will make your life better. Are these two points the same?

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Finally, we would like to hear your honest opinions of the ILA project based on your personal experiences.

32. If you could make any changes to the program what would recommend? (Please feel free to be honest in your response)
- For example (the cash out process, or the personal nature of the information required)*
33. Would you recommend that this project be expanded to other agencies and for others living in transitional housing situations? Why?
34. Knowing what you know about the program would you recommend it to others?

APPENDIX 7: ADDITIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHIC RESOURCES

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