



SOUTH SHORE
WORK ACTIVITY PROGRAM
ANNUAL REPORT
2021 2022

Looking Forward

The past year has been a year of transition and transformation for South Shore Work Activity Program. As with any change, there is growth and positivity combined with challenges and hurdles that test our determination.

Over the past three years, the provincial Work Activity programs have been in a renewal process led by the Department of Community Services. The goal of the renewal process was to update the framework of Work Activity and to bring some core similarities across the six programs operating in the province. The overall result is a refreshed program that supports the people who are unemployed and have trouble attaching or staying attached to a job, with opportunities to determine their needs and develop action plans that help them deal with their barriers so that they can attach more successfully to the labour market.

To support this work, the Department of Community Services identified common services and supports to be included within the Work Activity program design and committed to a three year funding agreement which is a first in the history of Work Activity Program that first began in Nova Scotia in the early 1980's.

This past year has also challenged our program operations on a number of levels. Continued outbreaks of COVID 19 in our province delayed a return to in person service delivery until last summer. The return included lots of precautions to prevent the virus from entering our workplace which also meant lots of barriers to returning to our standard service delivery practices. Masks, health checks, disinfecting, and distancing all became our new standard practice. Despite this we gradually returned to full day operations with all our program components being offered to participants.

Our participant numbers have remained low throughout the pandemic. We understand the reluctance and risk involved in taking part of something that involves being with groups of people. However, so many of our learning opportunities work best because they are experiential and hands on and include lots of discussion and participation. No virtual delivery options can meet the same level of success in helping people discover or overcome some of their personal barriers. Our decision to remain focused on in person instruction was a challenge for both our staff team and participants coming to the program. The results of this focus has had payoffs for participants and our staff team.

We started our year with the retirement of our Work Centre Manager. After 5 years with the program, Sharon Leblanc stepped down from her role to return to her own business which she had placed on hold to support the work of SSWAP. Sharon brought a great passion for SSWAP to her role believing that SSWAP was the greatest secret on the South Shore and worked hard over five years to help others discover the secret.

As part of our renewal process with our funder, our staffing model was reconfigured which resulted in the loss of one instructional position. Sadly, we celebrated the contributions of Flo Sampson to our program as she transferred to the day program at Bonny Lea Farm as the result of a layoff. A shock to all of us was the sudden loss of William (Bill) Nauss in late January. Bill was the driver of our van affectionately known as the Silver Bullet. Bill's loss from our team has left a gap that we will have to work hard to fill. In late February, our Program Leader Darlene Mills stepped away from full time employment after 19 years. Odessa Bezanson who for many years was our Upgrading Instructor, moved

into the role of Program Leader. This transfer created an opportunity for us to welcome Flo Sampson back to our team as the Life Skills/Personal Development Instructor. David Chaplin Saunders, Alison Whitehead, and Heather Collicutt round out our staff team.

Our Board of Management bid farewell to Mike Dockrill this year. Mike joined the Board and fulfilled the role of Treasurer for several years. His knowledge and experience will be missed around that table. Efforts to recruit two members from the community are ongoing.

Our Admission Committee met virtually throughout the year. The Committee's role is to ensure that applicant needs match the services and supports of the program. The Committee often is tasked with using the information collected during our application and screening process to determine if there is any reason why an individual may not be ready to benefit from the full Work Activity Program.

With our program format changes we have moved to a 26 week program length that is front-loaded with a 4 week employability assessment. This four week period allows almost anyone who is unemployed to identify and understand their barriers and to develop an employability plan that could involve a move to other services including a move to work or on to a continuation with our core vocational and essential skill development that includes a job placement and support with a move towards employment.

Our Board of Management worked to establish a way to ensure we have a permanent reminder of the late Bill Nauss' contribution to our program. Using funds donated in memoriam combined with our earned funds each year, the Board established the "Billy Fund" to support individual participant needs as they arise. Bill was a man who often helped when there was a need and most often without telling anyone what he had done. This fund will help carry on that legacy in the same manner.

Employment opportunities abound as we move away from the strict restrictions of the Pandemic. Doors are opening for participants who ready to work. At a recent Job Fair held in Lunenburg County, two participants walked away with job offers because of their discussion with employers at the Fair. Employers are open to considering broad possibilities as they try to fill their rotor of people needed to operate their business or offer their service. Many people who come to SSWAP have a great chance to move their employment goal to reality with the current state of the job market.

The challenges that lie ahead for us include building our participant numbers, having success in recruiting a permanent van driver, and recruiting a full time Work Centre Manager to replace to incumbent who will retire in September. One thing that the pandemic has taught us is that almost everything is possible. Just like finding ways to pivot in 2019 and 2020, we will rise to these challenges, and we might even have a little fun doing it.

Respectfully submitted,

David M Outhouse
Work Centre Manager

Looking Back at our Year

Our Participants

Total number screened and approved	28
Did not start	2
Completed the program	16
Still in the Program at March 31, 2022	2

Demographics

Age

18 to 29 years	64%
30 to 44 years	5%
45 to 54 years	18%

Home Community

Municipality of Chester	22%
Town of Mahone Bay	3%
Town of Lunenburg	3%
Municipality of District Lunenburg	29%
Town of Bridgewater	43%
Region of Queens	0%

Income Source

Income Assistance	43%
Disability Support Services	29%
Family Support	10%
Other (CPP, EI, COVID 19 Benefits)	18%

Referral Source

Department of Community Services	32%
School System	0%
Self Referral	53%
Other Community Agencies	15%

Primary Barrier to Employment

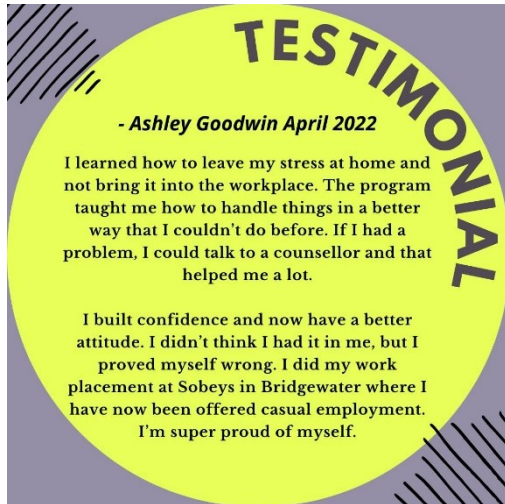
Social/Environmental Experiences	22%
Mental Health Issue	43%
Learning Difference	14%
Medical Health	18%
No work experience	3%

Outcomes

Employment	69%
Education and Further Training	12%
Job Search	19%

What Participants have to Say

At Program completion, we ask participants to take part in an exit interview. With their permission, we include their feedback to help improve the program and to help others understand the impact the program might have for them. Some examples from the past year follow from testimonials posted on our Facebook page:



Ivy Coolen - November 2021

testimonial

I learned new skills and improved old ones. I liked the Life Skills program because it helped me be more open and outgoing. There is an increase in my self-esteem and confidence.

Testimonial

My Community Health Worker suggested the program to me. The staff are nice. I got certifications and gained confidence so I could work again and felt like part of a team. I feel better about myself, now that I am employed again - my wallet is thicker.

- JH, September 2021



Special thanks to our Work Placement hosts:

Without the support of employers in our local communities, participants would not have the chance to apply what they learn. In a number of cases, employers who host work placements often offer employment if it is available.

Ocean mark K-9 Resort – Chester Basin

Shree Ganesh Ltd (Curry Express, On the Hook) -
Bridgewater

Bell's Independent Grocer - Hubbards

The Kitch'Inn – Mahone Bay

Danielle Barkhouse MLA Office - Chester

Sobeys - Bridgewater

KFC - Bridgewater

River Pub - Bridgewater

Dani's Laundromat - Chester

Osprey Ridge Golf Course – Bridgewater

NAPA – Chester

YMCA – Bridgewater

Bonny Lea Farm – Chester

Scotia Business Centre - Bridgewater

Sherwood Golf and Country Club – Sherwood

Pharmasave – Chester Basin

Fresh Cuts Market - Bridgewater



Funded under the Canada-Nova Scotia Labour Market Agreement



Our Financial Information:

Excerpts from our audited financial statements
For the Year Ended March 31, 2022

Revenues

NS Department of Community Services	497,781
Capital Grant	5,653
Sales/Operational Revenues	2,851
Interest	<u>289</u>
	\$ 506,574

Operating Expenses

Salaries and Benefits	388,442
Participant Allowances and Travel	23,445
Workers Compensation	4,249
Utilities	23,984
Vehicle Operations	11,245
Program Supplies	15,199
Insurance	4,200
Office Supplies	3,173
Travel	1,753
Depreciation	5,653
Property Rental	6,987
Professional Fees	3,800
Other Operational Expenses	<u>10,306</u>
	\$ 502,945

Surplus for the year \$ **3,629**

The financial statements of the operation are audited by BakerTilly through their offices in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia.