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# **Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISE): Workshop Synthesis 2020**

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Sprott School of Business  
Carleton University

RESEARCH REPORT  
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The report is based on and draws on portions of the presentations and handouts during the day by various presenters. Thanks are extended to them.

Despite our efforts to ensure the accuracy of the information provided, errors are possible. Please do not hesitate to contact the authors if there are factual errors or for comments and suggestions.

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# **Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISE): 2020 Workshop Synthesis /Entreprises sociales d'insertion par le travail (ESIT): Synthèse Atelier 2020**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This synthesis provides a summary of the presentations and discussions at the February 25, 2020, workshop organized by the Social Research Division of Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) of the Government of Canada. This workshop is part of a research program on work integration social enterprises (WISEs). At this workshop, six research teams presented their preliminary findings and eight social enterprise partners in these research teams presented their enterprises. ESDC staff presented a virtual platform pilot project for exchanging information and networking based on geomapping. This crowdsourcing project aims to collect and share open data with the community of WISE practitioners. A discussion with all participants ended the day.

## **RÉSUMÉ**

Cette synthèse offre un sommaire des présentations et des discussions de l'atelier du 25 février 2020 organisé par Emploi et Développement social Canada (EDSC), en particulier la Division de la recherche sociale du gouvernement du Canada. Cet atelier s'insère dans le cadre d'un programme de recherche sur les entreprises sociales d'insertion par le travail (ESIT). À cet atelier, six équipes de recherche ont présenté leurs résultats préliminaires et huit entreprises sociales partenaires dans ces équipes de recherche ont présenté leurs entreprises. Le personnel d'EDSC a présenté un projet pilote de plateforme virtuelle pour l'échange d'information et le réseautage basé sur la géocartographie. Ce projet de production participative vise à collecter et échanger des données ouvertes avec la communauté de l'ESIT. Une discussion avec l'ensemble des participants s'est déroulée en fin de journée.

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NOTE:

SRDC/SRSA = Social Research and Demonstration Corporation  
/ Société de recherche sociale appliquée

CCEDnet/RCDÉC = The Canadian Community Economic Development (CED) Network  
/ Le Réseau canadien de développement économique communautaire (DÉC)

## WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION

The 2020 workshop is a continuation of the reflection arising from the February 2019 workshop and is part of a research program on work integration social enterprises (WISE) funded by the Social Research Division of Employment and Social Development Canada of the Government of Canada. Patrick Bussière, Director, Social Research, ESDC, and François Brouard, Full Professor, Carleton University, who acted as facilitator for the day, led the workshops and the discussions.

The questions of the research program are:

- 1) Are WISEs effective in promoting the social and labour market integration of vulnerable individuals?
- 2) Which WISE models and type of training programs work best?
- 3) What is the return on investment for government?

The agenda can be found in Appendix A. After the opening remarks and the positioning of social enterprises in an international context, the workshop consisted essentially of four sessions:

- Session 1 – Eight social enterprises present their operations
- Session 2 – Demonstration of a pilot project on a virtual platform
- Session 3 – Presentation of preliminary results
- Session 4 – Group discussions on the WISE challenges

A social enterprise (SE) is a revenue-generating enterprise whose objectives are mainly social and whose surpluses are reinvested into the enterprise or into the community, instead of being motivated by the need to benefit shareholders and owners. A work integration social enterprise (WISE) can be defined as an organization using a real enterprise as a training location. WISEs operate in various business lines, for example the food and restaurant industry, agriculture, retail and distribution, culture and events, manufacturing (printing, textiles, electronics, plastics recycling, document destruction, cabinetmaking) and services (housecleaning).

WISE participants/employees experience a variety of challenges, including mental health problems, learning disorders, autism spectrum disorder, intellectual deficits, physical conditions, addiction, attitude problems, behavioural issues, low self-esteem, insufficient work experience, low education level, poor knowledge of the language of work, a criminal record, ongoing legal issues, a precarious financial situation and/or debt problems, unstable housing and/or homelessness, a toxic social and/or family environment, work-life balance constraints, regional remoteness and socio-cultural integration problems.

## OPENING REMARKS

Patrick Bussière, on behalf of Catherine Adam, Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic and Service Policy Branch, ESDC, made the opening remarks at the 2020 workshop. He began with a land acknowledgement: I would like to acknowledge that we are gathered today on the unceded traditional territory of the Algonquin Nation.

Social enterprises are occupying a more significant space in social and economic affairs in Canada and other countries, as you well know.

Governments across Canada, and, as my colleague Janet Golding will tell you in a few minutes, around the World, view the social enterprise sector as having the potential to move the needle on some of the most persistent social problems people face. In the case of WISEs, we see the potential to, among other things, help people move into employment in and to improve both their financial and overall well-being.

Many of you work for and with WISEs and are familiar with their evolution and growth. But let me share a few facts to highlight their importance:

- According to the 2014-2015 Pan-Canadian Social Enterprise Sector Surveys, WISEs comprise a significant proportion of social enterprises across Canada. Overall, the responding social enterprises in Canada have at least 254,000 individual members and 17,000 organizational memberships.
- According to the same study, work integration social enterprises created 31,000 full-time or part-time jobs in Canada. These jobs generate approximately \$442 million in salaries and wages.

But numbers alone don't tell us a lot about what these organisations are, what they do, who they are affiliated with, how they finance their operations, and the list goes on.

To start to answer some of these questions, ESDC launched the WISE Research Program in 2016. You are here today as a part of this Research Program. This program has already begun to yield information on how WISEs are organised, how they are financed, the kinds of people they work with and there is even the intention that we will learn something about how effective they are at integrating people into the labour force, and how this improves people's financial and psychological outcomes.

What is the WISE Research Program? To make the Program, ESDC selected six research projects; each led by a team of experts in the field, and affiliated with over 60 WISEs altogether. These projects have different focuses based on the expertise of their proponents, some focussing on local communities, others on persons with mental health and addictions issues, others on homelessness, and others more generally on workforce integration for all groups. Together, these six projects will provide information on WISEs in British Columbia, Ontario and Québec, in major cities like Toronto and Montréal, and in small communities like Simcoe County Ontario, and Hazelton British Columbia.

So far, these projects have recruited participants and collected baseline data, ESDC analysts have visited all of the program's WISEs in BC, all but one of the WISEs in Quebec, and approximately half of those in Ontario. We learned a lot about WISEs through these visits that we could not have learned otherwise, and got a chance to see how deeply you, the WISE practitioners care about the people you come alongside of and provide opportunities to.

Approximately one year ago, we held the 2019 WISE Workshop where WISEs and researchers shared information with each other and with us. The response to the 2019 Workshop was so overwhelmingly positive – researchers learned from each other, WISEs met each other to share ideas, and make connections, and ESDC officials were given insight into the potential of WISEs – that we decided to do it again in 2020.

Today's workshop is an integral part of this research program and is intended to serve as a platform where you exchange ideas, listen to findings at various stages, learn from each other, and bring your collective effort to help us respond to challenges that the sector is facing. We are certainly very pleased with the excellent collaboration we have established with you, researchers and practitioners, through these research projects and other supporting programs.

This is one of the reasons our department is seeking new opportunities to promote and support social enterprises not only as an alternative but also as a strong complement to other traditional approaches to addressing social problems that neither governments nor the private sector alone are able to tackle effectively.

What's next: Where is the WISE Research Program going? In 2020, we plan to continue to visit our WISEs, and we plan to visit all of the WISEs in the program before the Program ends in March 2022. In 2021, the six research projects will submit preliminary reports that will provide a fuller view of their findings. We hope some of that information will be ready for a 2021 Workshop. Then in 2022, we will get final reports and organise a special session to present the results of the Research Program to you, and to the Government of Canada more broadly.

I would like to conclude by thanking you for agreeing to join us to share your experiences and knowledge, the challenges you face and the opportunities that you create individually and collectively. Thank you for your important contribution to the socio-economic integration of disadvantaged people in our society.

## **SOCIAL ENTERPRISE: CANADA IN THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT**

Patrick Bussière, on behalf of Janet Goulding, Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Income Security and Social Development Branch, ESDC, presented “Social enterprise: Canada in the international context”.

In October 2019, Janet attended and participated in the annual Social Enterprise World Forum (SEWF), which took place in Addis Ababa in Ethiopia. Building off the momentum from the previous year’s event in Edinburgh (Scotland), which she also attended, and Christchurch (New Zealand), the Forum explored policy developments and brought together sector leaders, government officials and individual entrepreneurs. This is an indication of the growing importance of the role of social enterprises for socioeconomic development in many countries, including Canada.

The three-day event that Janet attended hosted a number of panels and covered a range of interrelated topics on social enterprises, including their role in tackling inequality, fighting for gender equality, helping address climate change, and creating jobs for marginalized populations including refugees and migrants. Regarding broader policy development, it was noted that a key barrier to reform were governments themselves, which have tended to announce sweeping reforms in the social enterprise sector without always following through with implementation measures.

To address this trend, delegates agreed for the need to establish meaningful partnerships with government actors, social enterprise leaders, businesses and civil society. This is certainly a lesson that resonates in Canada, where social enterprise actors have been working tirelessly over the years to raise awareness, strengthen their networks, and to engage with government at all levels to support the social enterprise ecosystem.

The Canadian Delegation for this Forum included two government representatives and over thirty stakeholders, including experts in the field of social enterprise, representatives from the Co-Ops and Mutuals Canada, and some Indigenous stakeholders. Janet had the opportunity to address the Forum and speak to Canada’s Social Innovation and Social Finance (SI/SF) Strategy and some key implementation measures being undertaken, namely:

- 1) the forthcoming Social Finance Fund (a \$755 million over 10-year repayable fund, which is anticipated to launch in 2020);
- 2) the related Investment Readiness Program (\$50M over 2 years, starting in 2019, to support social purpose organizations in improving their capacity and ability to participate in the social finance market and access new investment and contract opportunities); and,
- 3) the Social Innovation Advisory Council, which we hope will launch this year, and which will be comprised of external stakeholders who will help advance and oversee the implementation of Canada’s SI/SF Strategy while making progress to advance the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

For each of these initiatives, our development process and evidence-gathering has been rooted in co-creation and in exploring international models that have been used to unlock policy innovation and financing opportunities.

Another sign of our interest in social enterprises is the fact that Canada is organizing the next International Forum in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in September 2020. I hope that you will all be able to attend and share your experiences and apply the valuable lessons learned to your projects and the communities that you serve.



## **SESSION 1: WISEs IN PRACTICE – WHAT EXACTLY DO THEY DO?**

In session 1, various work integration social enterprises collaborating with the six research teams presented their organizations and what they do.

### **Julie Crevier, Collectif des entreprises d'insertion du Québec, Montreal QC**

Julie Crevier of the Collectif des entreprises d'insertion du Québec (CEIQ) presented her network, which comprises 50 WISEs. Although the CEIQ is based in Montreal, its organizations are spread throughout Quebec's 14 administrative regions in both urban and rural areas. The network has over 1,570 permanent employees and 3,076 employees in training per year, and it generates \$65 million in revenue from the sale of products and services. Approximately three quarters of graduates have found a job or returned to school and subsequently remained employed or in school after a year. The CEIQ's role is to serve as a resource-sharing lever and tool for Quebec's integration enterprises, particularly in the following areas: community life and member services, representation, promotion, research and development. La Mutuelle de formation des entreprises d'insertion du Québec (MFEIQ), a related organization, is responsible for training permanent employees at integration enterprises. Representatives of integration enterprises are involved in all levels of governance at the CEIQ and the MFEIQ. The CEIQ has developed guides and tools representing several examples of the impact of member involvement on community life.

Website: <http://collectif.qc.ca>

### **Katie Sanders, Operation Come Home, Ottawa ON**

Katie Sanders from Operation Come Home (OCH) presented innovative approaches to supporting vulnerable youth (aged 16-29) in employment with a focus on the homeless. Based in Ottawa, OCH is a hub for vulnerable youth and has 25 employees and an annual budget of 2 million dollars, 25% coming from donations and fundraising. OCH employs 30-40 youth annually and serves over 500 youth per year. OCH has multiple programs, wraparound supports and multiple employment options: Career Works, JobsFirst, Youth Workforce Initiative, JobReady, Social Enterprise Works. Services include pre-employment supports, mental health supports, crisis mental health, physical health supports, life skills building, self-esteem, long term counselling, addictions; harm reduction; basic needs; housing; reunification with families; financial literacy. OCH has three social enterprises: BottleWorks (a commercial bottle pick up business), FoodWorks (a catering business) and ArtWorks (a partnership with United World Voices). Participants work at a SE for 19 weeks and then come back for pre-employment and other supports to get a job in the community (4 week program). OCH helps people to develop their own strengths and to better use those strengths to attain stability: schools, jobs, personal lives. Services are about both gaining and retaining employment.

Website: <http://operationcomehome.ca>

### **Stewart King, Gateway Linens, Toronto ON**

Stewart King presented Gateway Linens & Disposal Services (GL), an industrial laundry operation. Laundry services include pick up, sorting, wash, dry, fold, packaging and delivery back. Disposal Services collect, load and responsibly dispose of garbage and other waste. Based in Toronto, GL is a branch of Salvation Army (an international charitable organization). The objective is employment retraining to support the marginalized: homeless or at risk of homelessness; substance abuse, mental health, and skills development and financial literacy. GL generates own revenue in addition to the seed money that was required to begin. Two stories were presented: story of James and the story of Jean. James, now in his early 50s, had serious issues, such as abusive childhood, being on the streets for 35 years, not trusting shelters, having been in jail, alcohol, and illiteracy. More than anything, what GL is doing is to take in individuals who have not been in the workplace at all (or in years), and creating an environment of integration in the work setting, through many ways: modeling (healthy work place), skills development, financial literacy, and incentivizing people towards a permanent and stable environment. GL use the term “transforming influence” to help individuals learn, grow and move towards self-reliance.

Website: <http://www.gatewaylinens.com>

### **Erin Chapelle, The Karma Project / Paul Santos, the YMCA of Simcoe Muskoka ON**

Erin Chapelle presented The Karma Project with Paul Santos of the YMCA of Simcoe Muskoka in Ontario. The Karma Project oversees the SEED project (Social Enterprise Education), which is giving youth in North Simcoe opportunities to address issues of food security while getting the experience of launching and promoting a social enterprise within the local community. The Karma Project has designed an intensive education program with hands-on training in gardens, kitchens, and markets. The project involves at risk youth experiencing low or no income and works with people with diverse barriers. Youth gain real-world experience, as they work together to create, develop, deliver, and market products and services. The SEED program works with schools and YMCA via monthly cohorts of youth. The alternative high school created a student nutrition program for four local elementary schools, and the YMCA created range of traditional food products. Working once a week at Ste. Marie among the Hurons (a historic site that re-visits the Jesuit-Indigenous relationship-building from the past centuries), participants are grounded in local tradition and foodways. What the youth are reacting to is that youth are in communities as mentors (not employers). Difference between values and value were raised. “Values” is more important as SEED work with youth and the base of Social Enterprise. SEED teach them skills regarding what they need in their own homes as well as their SE business. “Value” is to get a better understanding of the multiple bottom lines and the return on investment. In social enterprise, the biggest thing is not just the product, but how it integrates into the community. Working closely with a group of core youth and the YMCA, SEED is creating a micro-credential program, to be launched in May 2020. A video “Karma Project: Building Community Through Food” was presented.

Website: <http://www.seedproject.ca>

**David Williams, Rainbow's End, Hamilton ON**

David Williams presented Rainbow's End (RE), a community development corporation and a registered charity that employs people living with mental illness. They serve the Hamilton-Burlington region and operate a number of social enterprises, such as Mow-Town, R.E.A.L., Colors Café, Bistro, Clean-Up Crew and Pins'n Needles. Their vision is to create supportive and diverse social enterprises through which people living with mental illness can experience empowerment, inclusion and dignity. The goal is: real work at fair wages, transferable skills and opportunities for promotion. RE uses this SE employment model: 1) prepare, train and equip; 2) sell your services and 3) recruit a team manager who can provide guidance, training and on-the-job leadership. Funding comes from regular funding, growth funding, external grants (e.g. Trillium Foundation), cash from our operations, and assets sold. RE receive referrals through 3 sources: councillors (e.g. St Josephs), March of Dimes; from the candidates themselves, and from family members. What is certain: there is no shortage of applicants. So, stakeholder and partner organization work is very important. RE works with stakeholders to ensure that basic training is in place. They helped more than 60 employees in 2019. What they've found is that the variety of skills required for year-round work is really key to achieving their mission to provide people with reliable income and new opportunities.

Website: [www.rainbowsend.ca](http://www.rainbowsend.ca)

**Hawa Mire & Jonathan Gault, Eva's Print Shop, Toronto ON**

Hawa Mire and Jonathan Gault presented Eva's group and Eva's Print Shop. Every day Eva's provides shelter, housing, and support for 123 young people aged 16 to 24 in downtown Toronto. Eva's programs and services includes: clinical services (family reconnect and intake), independent living skills (financial literacy), education, harm reduction, housing, follow-up supports, employment and training programs. Eva's annual budget is \$12M/year. Founded in 1993 by a Jamaican-born immigrant, Eva Smith, Eva's includes: Eva's Place, an emergency shelter for 40 youth, Eva's satellite, an emergency shelter for 33 youth with special health supports for addiction and/or mental health, and Eva's Phoenix, a transitional housing for 50 youth and employment training facility. Founded on a donation of printing press to Eva's by Doug Dempsey (Rotary Club of Willowdale), Eva's Print Shop (EPS) is a full-service digital printer that reduces youth homelessness. EPS run a 7-week training program for youth at risk of homelessness (via Eva's Phoenix). The training program focused on Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign, Acrobat. Training includes first aid, workplace rights and soft skills such as attention to detail and customer service. Once a graduate moves on, they can work within the internship and the shop, which runs a 17 weeks (full-paid employment), with wraparound supports. In 2019 EPS served 65 youth with interest in arts, business, design, printing and marketing. The employment programs don't just pay minimum wage, but a liveable wage (\$19.76/hour just to manage liveable costs). Partners includes: Konica Minolta, Buy Good Feel Good; Paprika Festival; Xerox; Print Three; Symcor. "When you print with EPS, you get quality, reliability and speed – and at no extra cost, you change lives."

Website: <http://www.evas.ca>

**Matt Dirks & Tamara Seebaran, Communitas Social Enterprises, Abbotsford BC**

Matt Dirks and Tamara Seebaran presented Communitas Social Enterprises (CSE), part of Communitas Supportive Care Society (CSCS), a faith-based, registered charity providing care in communities across British Columbia to those living with developmental disabilities, mental health challenges and acquired brain injury. Last year, Communitas had approximately 453 Staff in 33 locations in British Columbia; provides services including assisted living, and life skill supports among other services. In 2019, Communitas served 873 individuals through 43 unique services. CSE began in 1992 in Abbotsford by hiring and training people with mental health challenges providing a springboard for further employment. CSE employs people of all abilities in their enterprises: Valley Recycling, Shredmasters (document destruction), janitorial services, Vehicle Maintenance Program, CommCrew (maintenance /yard work), and Customer Service Training Program. CSE's model offers training, job placement, and permanent employment options. CSE has 30 permanent employees and between 8 and 12 people in temporary training streams. CSE works with approximately 400 businesses in the Fraser Valley and has strong roots in the community. CSE's model reflects 20 years of evolution, based on collaboration with its partners and stakeholders. There are many stories at CSE which demonstrate how employment and other community supports can contribute to overcoming barriers such as a mental illness. Brian, for example, started in our social enterprises and was recently hired as the newest Manager of our Peer Support programming. CSE's work is also contributing to mitigating the impacts of poverty and lack of employment opportunities for persons with diverse abilities.

Website: <http://www.communitasenterprises.com>

**Anissa Watson, Youth Works, Hazelton BC**

Anissa Watson presented Youth Works (YW) based in Hazelton. YW supports employment for youth on Gitksan territory (Indigenous) in British Columbia. Upper Skeena realities are challenging: a remote location with unemployment rates in some villages as high as 93% and very high suicide rates, especially among youth. Hazelton services covered seven villages, two regional districts, and the rural valleys of Kitwanga and Kispiox. YW goals are: to introduce a lifelong perspective on addressing poverty; to support young adults to develop a sense of hope, optimism, and dreams for a brighter future; and to support young adults to develop attitudes, behaviours, and skills that allow them to take charge of their lives. At YW, they are building: intergenerational knowledge sharing, work place skills, training in the kitchen and catering field, personal assets and strengths and relationships within the community. Youth engage along a spectrum: some want to volunteer, some want part-time employment, others full-time employment. Revenue remains within organization to continue services (e.g. financial literacy, social justice awareness). YW works with business and community partners, mental health programs, families and services to help offer a well-rounded source of support. YW is focused on a sustainable livelihood in which work is just a piece of life: work should be flexible and we allow those who want to explore other opportunities the space and time needed to do so. Many youth stay involved for several years before they are ready to move on from YW. After leaving, many stay connected as part of a community.

Website: <http://upperskeena.ca>

## **SESSION 2: DEMONSTRATION OF THE ONLINE NETWORKING PLATFORM PILOT PROJECT**

In this session, Patrick Bussière, Caroline Désilets, Laurent Brisebois and Julia Conzon of ESDC presented a virtual networking and information-sharing platform. This was an extension of the geomapping project presented in 2019.

This crowdsourcing project aims to collect and share open data with WISE communities of practice through a Web application. It will include an online questionnaire covering a wide range of topics. The questionnaire will collect general information about organizations, such as their location, size, business lines, business models, details about their training and employment programs, and the challenges faced by social enterprises.

The project's objectives are to:

- 1) Raise awareness of the WISE sector in Canada;
- 2) Create new virtual networking opportunities for practitioners
- 3) Support the exchange of knowledge and information on business models, training approaches, best practices, strategies for scaling up and franchising opportunities
- 4) Contact directors of social enterprises and encourage them to share their knowledge of the sector to fill the identified gaps
- 5) Produce open data for the whole sector

This data sharing can make it easier to pool best practices and alternative business models and to open up new opportunities for collaboration. The data generated will also support reflection on social innovation and social funding policies and programs, particularly the investment preparation program and Social Finance Fund.

As part of the pilot phase, in summer 2020, ESDC would like to ask all WISE organizations participating in the research program to test the application and validate the questionnaire in order to ensure that it is as informative as possible for practitioners. At the end of the tests, a series of changes will probably be made to the application to better reflect the reactions and needs. If the pilot phase proves to be successful and the practitioners feel that it is an innovative and useful data-sharing tool. ESDC will start working on the public release of the pilot project in fall 2020.

The Web application is divided into three parts: a) a landing page; b) a data visualization tool of who have already contributed (e.g. past organizations); and c) a questionnaire. The visualization tool will include information, statistics from the data set, and tabs (e.g. per province, target populations).

### **SESSION 3: PRESENTATION OF PRELIMINARY FINDINGS**

After a brief introduction by Patrick Bussière, session 3 focused on the presentation of the longitudinal research and preliminary findings of six research teams. The studies began in 2017 or 2018.

#### **Shawn de Raaf, SRDC/SRSA-ON & Erin Chapelle**

Shawn de Raaf and Erin Chapelle presented the research project “Field Trials and Evaluation of Three WISE Programs in Northern Simcoe County Ontario”. The research questions are: Does WISE model provide meaningful opportunities for vulnerable youth populations in rural communities to improve their labour market outcomes and social inclusion?; Does integrated training, mentorship and social entrepreneurship programming improve the skills, career activation, and employability of at-risk youth participants?; Does this type of intervention lead to improved social outcomes of participants?; Do participant outcomes vary across the project’s key subgroups of interest?. A supplementary component of the evaluation will examine the capacity of The Karma Project (KP) to supporting vulnerable youth in their employment journeys.

Using mixed-methods approach to examine project outcomes and impacts for participants, The Karma Project, and the local community. Survey instruments at intake (baseline), three-months, one-year and two-years, MIS system and interviews are used. Study has 59 youth participating, and the YMCA folks have just completed their interventions. The study will be looking at post-intervention outcomes, and presently doing a 1-year follow-up survey (followed by a 2-year follow up survey). And then study will look at a cost-benefit analysis.

The Karma Project has developed the SEED program (Social Enterprise Education), which offers food-based social entrepreneurship learning and work experiences for participating youth. KP has two partners – the Simcoe County District School Board (Simcoe Alternative Secondary School – SASS) – the original partner, and the YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka (YMCA). There have been 59 participants, 23 from the YMCA, and 36 from SASS. SASS and the YMCA refer participants to KP. KP seeks to encourage social entrepreneurship. Youth are encouraged to think about opportunities for them in their communities. We had committed partners for this, but the schoolboard was highly reluctant to collect any information. Peculiar data collection system for SASS participants – because SASS wishes to guarantee the privacy of their students, a PIN system has been developed to workaround was to use a PIN number for students so that the project could track their data, and once they leave, they can sign a consent form to directly contribute data.

Respondents reported high levels of satisfaction with their WISE entrepreneurship experience and that the training was relevant to their education and/or career goals. Most commonly identified life changes include improved self-esteem; increased life satisfaction; and larger network of friends and acquaintances. Most commonly cited barriers to employment include: not having education or relevant experience; limited job opportunities in local community; unaccommodating workplaces (physical or mental health issues). The value of partnerships was stressed, for example, the partners were critical in making the programming and realizing the value of multi-setting environments.

**Andrea Chan & Justine Hodgson-Bautista, University of Toronto**

Andrea Chan and Justine Hodgson-Bautista presented the research project “WISE Project for Training At-Risk Youth”. The goal is to follow youth over 3 years who are trained for workforce integration by a group of organizations and to obtain information on whether their circumstances are improving economically, socially and psychologically. The research objectives are: assess how WISEs training youth-in/at risk for employment and skills development are achieving this goal over time; compare the impacts of WISEs with more conventional government-funded programs; analyze whether the economic and social return for WISEs are commensurate with the investment, using social accounting; and support capacity building efforts of our partner organizations. This project looks at two streams – WISEs and traditional employment models. The study is tracking employment outcomes as well as wellbeing measures and access to services.

Using mixed-methods approach, largely quantitatively driven, the study will be looking at post-intervention outcomes. Survey instruments used at intake (baseline), a 6-month follow-up survey, a 1-year follow-up survey, and a 2-year follow-up survey (followed by a 3-year follow up survey). The study will conduct interviews with a portion of the participants. After the baseline survey, the youth participated in training facilitated by 8 partner organizations: 4 WISEs in Ontario (Youth Opportunities Unlimited, Operations Come Home, Eva’s Phoenix, Furniture Bank), 4 traditional training programs (YMCA, ACCESS Employments, The Centre for Education & Training and St. Stephen’s Community House, all in Greater Toronto Area). Baseline survey with 621 people aged 17-35 who are going to training, and who experience a number of barriers. Follow-ups and the response rate was 57% (353) for the 6-month follow-up, 92% (325) for the 1-year follow-up. Retention rate are better than expected. Baseline data includes: demographics, housing status, employment, personal satisfaction; and follow-up data includes: demographic updates, post-training relationship with organization; updates to socio-economic situations; updates to personal satisfaction, current employment status and feedback on training.

Baseline findings indicate that there are salient differences in profile between youth who are supported in WISEs and youth in more conventional, classroom-based training programs. The overall picture suggests that participants from SEs, as a group, were in greater precarity at the baseline point (i.e., higher proportion of SE participants who had less schooling, accessed food banks at least occasionally, experience barriers to employment relating to mental health and fear of losing government financial assistance, expressed lower satisfaction with the different areas of wellbeing examined). Also, non-Canadian born and less-precarious groups tend to be part of the non-SE programs over SE programs.

Preliminary follow-up (6-month and 1-year) findings include slight successive reduction in some measures of vulnerability for SE group. SE participants were accessing in greater proportion certain support services still through the training organization (e.g., certification support, housing support, health services, counselling support), as compared to the non-SE group. SE participants experience greater reduction in proportion regarding different instrumental employment barriers at follow-up, as compared to changes among the non-SE participants.

**Jean-Marc Fontan, University of Quebec at Montreal (UQAM)**

Jean-Marc Fontan presented the research project “Efficacité d’ESIT intervenant auprès de jeunes adultes montréalais: étude longitudinale” [Effectiveness of WISE working with young adults from Montreal: longitudinal study]. The goal of this study is to understand what the training offered by the WISEs brings to its participants (on several levels) and to show the efficiency of this training in terms of socio-occupational integration. The core objectives are to create and strengthen partnerships, describe and analyze the integration ecosystem and its developing context, identify and qualify selected WISE intervention models, conduct a longitudinal study with people participating in WISE training program, and develop WISE reflexivity and self-assessment capacity.

This is a partnership approach between partners and researchers. Statistical data provided by the WISEs, questionnaires (assessment tools from participants used by the WISEs, monitoring the study, quality of life) and interviews are part of the methodology used. These tools were developed with partners. After the consultations with test groups and the development of the protocol and forms, questionnaires are used at the starting point and in follow-up afterwards. Interviews are conducted with participants. In addition to the CEIQ, the four WISEs in Quebec are Insertech (computer recycling and refurbishing), Imprime Emploi (printing and finishing), Ateliers d’Antoine (cabinetmaking) and Pro-prêt (industrial cleaning).

The selection and retention of WISEs is unstable considering the high turnover among WISE managers. There was an initial sample of 120 people in a social integration situation through WISE with a final retention goal of 50 people. Participants were between 18 and 65 years old (26% were over 36 years old).

The aspects considered are efficiency, achievement of objectives, (effectiveness), response to the workers training needs (relevance) and social changes made possible (net impact).

Among the challenges are overcoming issues related to turnover of strategic resources in WISEs, retention of participants, and data extraction and processing. There seem to be favourable elements, such as partnership, understanding the integration ecosystem and understanding the work and adaptation capacity of WISEs.

As the study progressed, a frame of reference was produced, of the study model and the main collection tools. Among the ongoing developments, there is documentation on the adaptation capacity and the reflexivity of integration enterprises and the longitudinal study. There will be an analysis of the study’s data and the seminar presentation with representatives from the research and integration fields.



**Mike Toye, CCEDnet/RCDEc**

Mike Toye presented the research project “Alleviating Homelessness: WISE Research”. This is a homelessness-focused project. The research questions are: To what extent are WISE partners promoting participants’ social and labour market integration?; How do participant impacts compare with non-WISE participants?; How do participant outcomes and experiences vary by WISE and by subgroup?; What features of WISE partners are particularly effective?; What is the return on investment for government financial support of this set of WISEs?

Adopting a participatory approach to research, it involves WISEs and other stakeholders throughout research study. In the quasi-experimental design, the youth participated in training (the intervention) facilitated by 5 WISEs (Building Up (construction contractor), Hawthorne Food and Drink (hospitality workers), Gateway Linens & Disposal Services (industrial laundry), Destination Café (coffee shop), LOFT Kitchen (catering services)). Other partners include Social Enterprise Toronto and United Way of Greater Toronto. There is a pre-intervention survey (baseline) for the 5 WISEs. The research design was originally planning to use administrative data, but this did not work out. The study had to recruit a comparison group.

The study has 133 participants for the 5 WISE partners. They are new employees of participating WISEs who consent to be part of the study. The study has 143 in the comparison group. Aim was to have similar characteristics, i.e., individual who is homeless or at risk of homeless; receipt of income assistance; similar to participants in terms of degree of employment readiness; willingness to participate in the research. The comparison group is a bit older than the treatment group.

Participant outcome measures include employment and earnings, housing situation, Ontario Work (OW) / Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) receipt, participation in education/training, career activation, self-care, community functioning, self-esteem and self-efficacy, social support, demographical information.

Depending on the timing of the follow-up survey after intervention, some participants may not have moved directly to employment, but results show a reduction of unemployment, as well as increased self-esteem, overall growth of network of friends and relationships; improvements of mental health; physical health; better housing, and gained work-related impacts (employment, training, certification).

Learning is challenging because the size of WISEs vary greatly. WISEs has both time-limited and long-term interventions. Opportunities pursued to work with the WISEs to build their capacity for impact measurement over the long term, and to support them in their data collection as part of the partnership-building.

**Shawn de Raaf, SRDC/SRSA-BC & Rupert Downing**

Shawn de Raaf and Rupert Downing presented the research project “Long-Term Case Studies of Work Integrated Social Enterprises in British Columbia”. The key target population are immigrants, persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples in rural communities. The research questions are: What supports do WISEs need to hire vulnerable populations in a sustainable fashion?; What are the long-term employment outcomes for individuals who participate in WISE placement?; What sector supports and capacity building is needed to scale up and improve outcomes amongst WISEs?; What policy measures could improve the scale and impact of WISEs in BC?.

The study is divided in three phases: a development phase (organizational capacity), an implementation phase (individual participant outcomes) and a follow-up phase (one post-intervention and three-annual follow-ups) (outcomes analysis and policy development). Research methods used include sector scan, stakeholder & expert interviews, observations, surveys, interview with participants, focus groups, document analysis, and administrative data. Training offered by 6 WISEs in two centers in British Columbia: Hazelton (Senden Agricultural Resource Centre, Gitanmaax Market & Gitanmaax Food & Fuel, Youth Works) and Abbotsford (MCC Community Enterprises, Communitas ShredMaster & ValleyRecycling, Archway Interpretation and Translation Services & Delish Catering)).

Mediating factors include participant assets and attitudes, including gender, education, disability, indigenous, immigrant status, labour market attachment, rural/urban, local labour market condition. Assets are subdivided in financial, human, personal, physical and health assets.

As part of the demographics of the participants, more than half are between 24-44 years old; more woman than men; majority with unemployment experience or very short period of employment. Employment barriers include: education / work experience, up-to-date technical skills, unaccommodating work environments, Canadian experience / foreign credential recognition, transition supports, and risk of losing benefits. Motivation of participants to get involve with the WISE include: to gain work experience, thought it could lead to other work opportunities, to make money right away, encouraged to apply by someone else, WISE will provide me with the type of employment I need.

Main work-related impacts are gained work experience and training and helped me find a job or a better job, received certification. Main changes in life are increase in life satisfaction, more relationships that provide support, increase in self-esteem, improvement in physical / mental health, increase of overall network of friends, help find better housing.

A novel feature of the project is the Learning Community that Rupert Downing is leading, which has begun with the project’s WISE partners and is now in the process of expanding to a broader group of WISEs and social enterprise stakeholders in BC.

**Rosemary Lysaght & Agnieszka Fecica, Queen's University**

Rosemary Lysaght and Agnieszka Fecica presented the research project "Evaluating the Effectiveness of WISE in the Mental Health Sector". It is a mental health sector based project. The main goals of the project are to answer these questions: Who works in WISEs – and why do they choose WISE?; How does WISE participation impact social and labour market integration for people with serious mental illness?; What difference can be seen in the level and nature of change in socio-economic indicators for people who remain in a WISE as compared with those workers who move on to other learning or employment options?

Using mixed-methods approach, the study is looking at post-intervention outcomes. Research strategy must be flexible and responsive to presenting realities.

Quantitative data are collected using an interview format, the instrument comprising 188 questions about work experience, financial situation, physical and mental health, social function and work attitudes. Quantitative interviews are conducted at intake (baseline), with 18 and 36 month follow-ups. Participants have so far not expressed any concern about length of the interview. Qualitative interviews will be conducted with a subset of participants, purposively selected based in their status at Time 2. Due to unique characteristics of the population involved, skilled interviewers are required.

The WISE intervention is provided by 7 WISEs in Ontario: Causeway Work Centre, Fresh Start Cleaning and Maintenance, Goodwill Industries, Impact Junk Solutions, Rainbow's End Community Development Corporation, The Voices, Opportunities & Choices Employment Club (VOCEC), Working for Change.

In total, the study has 106 participants, including 63 recently hired employees (around 2 months) and 43 long-term employees (around 5-7 years on average). The demographic characteristics of the study participants reveal that: 49% of participants are in their 20s and 30s, 24% report being a visible minority, 42% identify as female, 56% attended or graduated from high school. This project has a very high participant retention rate to Time 2 of 88%. Retaining participants for up to 3 years with limited contact in between is challenging, but possible.

Most study participants work part-time at a WISE: 41% (0-10 hours), 27% (11-20 hours), 17% (21-30 hours), 15% (31 hours +). The average monthly WISE income is \$847/month. Most (87%) rely on additional sources of income: 71% from Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) / Ontario Work (OW), 25% from other jobs and 8% from family support.

Webpage: <https://rehab.queensu.ca/wise>

## SESSION 4: GROUP DISCUSSION

Workshop participants, consisting of a combination of practitioners, researchers, government players and external experts from partners, including social enterprises, academia, the public service, civil society and the community, discussed various issues, particularly what is the future of this intervention? Where do you see things going? What things should be avoided?

Academics and practitioners discussed the dynamics of leadership in social enterprises i.e. high turnover that poses challenges for organizations. They noted that it is mostly a generation shift, but also that there is an appeal for practitioners that are successful to go elsewhere with their skills, for a higher salary. As the old guard are leaving for retirement and some are leaving for better jobs, some succession planning issues are present and WISEs could learn from other organizations as succession is a problem in all sectors.

They mentioned that a center linking academics and practitioners is established in Quebec (The TIESS – Territoires innovants en économie sociale et solidaire) and helps a lot as a place to establish or continue the relationships with the big groups of practitioners and connect them with the research. Maybe something similar could be created in other provinces?

On subsidies, participants discussed how some WISEs want to be self-sufficient, but not all. It was said that perhaps registering as a charity may not be a bad idea, and subsidies should be part of the mandate.

The notion of “Réflexivité sociale” (social reflexivity) was discussed. To not wait for leaders take initiative in the social sector. They noted the example of the 2012-2015 cost benefit analysis of WISEs in Quebec. Some WISEs think differently. But there is a need to have a continuous dialogue to have a common point of view. Subsidy in general is not a concept that is well understood in the WISE community.

Procurement: In Quebec, partnerships are being established – consortiums of SEs are being formed – to respond to procurement requests that are too large for them to respond to alone. In Toronto, collective purchase agreements are being signed with other social enterprises. The prohibitive procurement process was discussed noting that only a small number of social enterprises were identified as social procurement. Most social enterprises are found to have been funded for procurement through longer-term agreements. It was noted that there is a lot of interest in social procurement.

Around social finance, most people in the room seemed to not understand the concept of repayable investments and showed even less interest in it. However, one participant noted the need for blended finance (need for grant funding as well). The Toronto Enterprise Fund was stated as an example where WISEs had used repayable investments. He noted that repayable finance could be justified for business expansion.

Clear language about performance measurement and financial indicators would be a big contribution to the sector. Knowing the nature and sources of funding in the sector would be helpful.

## CLOSING SESSION AND CONCLUSION

François Brouard ended the day with a few thoughts after an eventful day. With all of the presentations, it is clear that social enterprises and work integration social enterprises are useful to society. The case histories heard are inspiring, moving and positive. There are concrete actions that are changing and transforming the lives of people dealing with various challenges, and the finding of undeniable success for people and communities. Although it involves work integration, integration or reintegration into life must be discussed. The completed work goes beyond the employment dimension, but must also encompass a set of dimensions in the lives of participants. It is a holistic approach to improve the quality of life of our fellow citizens facing personal and work-related challenges.

Research teams including social enterprises, participants, communities and researchers with ESDC funding are true partnerships. The completed work and the results of various longitudinal studies should provide answers to certain questions. It is important to note the significance of communication and creating connections between various partners and to want to continue and extend the dialogue to the whole WISE sector.

Seeing people who are taking their life into their hands and in their minds is inspiring for the future. After all, it is not just about creating value, but rather about creating value to help others, improving the community and training people by equipping them to face the challenges of work and life. There are still certain challenges for social enterprises, particularly competition, policies and procurement strategies, financial disincentives to work (e.g. benefit cuts) and the availability of support or funding for WISEs and communities.

Despite the passion that motivates WISE managers and employees, we must recognize the fragility of WISEs, especially the high turnover of staff with specific skills who must receive competitive compensation for their expertise. There are costs inherent in the WISE models compared with organizations working within a more conventional framework, but without them, there would be even more significant social costs. This brings about challenges in evaluating programs and specific measures attesting to the benefits of these WISEs in a world focused on performance, the economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

Although certain challenges exist, the work is continuing in social enterprises by passionate people, and positive impacts are visible. An overall understanding of the WISE environment and the results of scientific studies should help formulate public policy in the long term and lead to uplifting actions.

Patrick Bussière thanked participants for their presence and is already planning the 2021 meeting.

**APPENDIX A – MEETING AGENDA**

**Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISEs) 2020 Workshop**

Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020

Time: 8:15 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Location: Notre Dame A - Four Points Sheraton Hotel & Conference Centre  
Gatineau – Ottawa  
35 Laurier St., Gatineau, Quebec J8X 4E9, Canada

8:15–8:45	Registration and networking
8:45–9:00	<p><b>Introduction and agenda setting</b></p> <p>Patrick Bussière, Director, Social Research, ESDC and François Brouard, Carleton University, Facilitator for the day</p> <p><b>Opening remarks</b></p> <p>Catherine Adam, Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic and Service Policy Branch, ESDC</p>
9:00–9:15	<p><b>Social enterprises in the international context</b></p> <p>Janet Goulding, Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Income Security and Social Development Branch, ESDC</p>
9:15–10:30	<p><b>Session 1a: WISEs in practice – what exactly do they do?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Julie Crevier, Collectif des entreprises d'insertion du Québec</li> <li>- Katie Sanders, Operation Come Home, Ottawa</li> <li>- Stewart King, Gateway Linens, Toronto</li> <li>- Erin Chapelle, The Karma Project and Paul Santos, the YMCA of Simcoe Muskoka</li> </ul>
10:30–10:45	Break
10:45–12:00	<p><b>Session 1b: WISEs in practice – what exactly do they do?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- David Williams, Rainbow's End, Hamilton</li> <li>- Hawa Mire / Jonathan Gault, Eva's Print Shop, Toronto</li> <li>- Matt Dirks / Tamara Seebaran, Communitas Shred Masters, Abbotsford</li> <li>- Anissa Watson, Youth Works, Hazelton</li> </ul>

12:00–1:00	Lunch break
1:00–1:30	<p><b>Session 2: Map pilot demonstration</b></p> <p>Presenters: Patrick Bussière, Caroline Désilets and Laurent Brisebois, ESDC</p>
1:30–3:00	<p><b>Session 3: Presentation of preliminary results</b></p> <p>Introduction: Patrick Bussière, Director, Social Research, ESDC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Field Trials and Evaluation of Three WISE Programs in Northern Simcoe County Ontario, Shawn de Raaf, SRDC</li> <li>- WISE Project for Training At-Risk Youth, Andrea Chan, OISE</li> <li>- Efficacité d’ESIT intervenant auprès de jeunes adultes montréalais: étude longitudinale, Jean-Marc Fontan, UQAM</li> <li>- Alleviating Homelessness: WISE Research, Mike Toye, CCEDnet</li> <li>- Long-Term Case Studies of Work Integrated Social Enterprises in British Columbia, Shawn de Raaf, SRDC-BC</li> <li>- Evaluating the Effectiveness of WISE in the Mental Health Sector, Rosemary Lysaght &amp; Agnieszka Fecica, Queen’s</li> </ul>
3:00–3:15	Break
3:00–3:45	<p><b>Session 4: Group discussion</b></p> <p>WISE practitioners, researchers, external experts</p> <p>What is the future of this intervention? Where do they see things going? Are there things to be changed?</p>
4:00–4:30	<p><b>Closing session</b></p> <p>François Brouard, Carleton University Patrick Bussière, Director, Social Research, ESDC</p>