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# **Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISE): Workshop Synthesis 2021**

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Sprott School of Business  
Carleton University

RESEARCH REPORT  
SCSE–CSES

March 2021

**ESiT**  
PROJET DE RECHERCHE

**WISE**  
RESEARCH PROJECT

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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): 2021 Workshop Synthesis**

## **/ Entreprises sociales d'insertion par le travail (ESIT): Synthèse Atelier 2021**

**François Brouard**, DBA, FCPA, FCA  
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### **ABSTRACT**

This report summarizes the presentations and discussions at the February 10 and 11, 2021, workshop organized by the Social Research Division of Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC). This workshop is part of a research program on work integration social enterprises (WISEs). On the first day, the topic was COVID-19 and WISEs with five leaders' perspective, a presentation from the Institute on Governance and a group discussion. At the end of the day, a discussion was held with all the participants. On the second day, six research teams presented their findings to date. An additional reflection is included with this report to contribute to the next phases.

### **RÉSUMÉ**

Ce rapport est une synthèse des présentations et des discussions de l'atelier tenu les 10 et 11 février 2021 organisé par la Division de la recherche sociale au sein d'Emploi et Développement social Canada (EDSC). Cet atelier s'insère dans le cadre d'un programme de recherche sur les entreprises sociales d'insertion par le travail (ESIT). Durant la première journée, le thème était la COVID-19 et les ESIT avec la perspective de cinq dirigeants, une présentation de l'Institut sur la gouvernance et une discussion de groupe. Une discussion avec l'ensemble des participants s'est déroulée en fin de journée. Durant la deuxième journée, six équipes de recherche ont présenté leurs résultats à ce jour. Une réflexion additionnelle est jointe au présent rapport pour contribuer aux prochaines phases.

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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 2021 workshop is a continuation of the reflection arising from the February 2020<sup>1</sup> 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 workshop 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 two-day meeting agenda is presented in Appendix A. Introductory remarks were made each day. The workshop included four main sessions:

- Day 1    Session 1 – COVID-19 and WISEs – leaders' perspective  
            Session 2 – Presentation by the Institute on Governance - COVID-19 challenges  
            Session 3 – Group discussion
- Day 2    Session 4 – Presentation of findings to date  
            Conclusion for the workshop

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 disabilities, 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.

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<sup>1</sup> Brouard, F. (2020). *Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISE): Workshop Synthesis 2020*, Research report SCSE/CSES, Sprott Centre for Social Enterprises (SCSE/CSES), Sprott School of Business, Carleton University, March, 23p.

Brouard, F. (2020). *Entreprises sociales d'insertion par le travail (ESIT): Synthèse Atelier 2020*, Rapport de recherche SCSE/CSES, Sprott Centre for Social Enterprises / Centre Sprott pour les entreprises sociales (SCSE/CSES), Sprott School of Business, Carleton University, mars, 25p.

## **INTRODUCTORY REMARKS / MOTS D'OUVERTURE**

### **Janet Goulding, ESDC - Social Enterprise: Canada in the International Context**

Thank you for this opportunity to take a moment and speak about social enterprises in the international context. I will also provide some highlights from the 2020 Social Enterprise World Forum (or SEWF), which had some meaningful messages vis-à-vis social enterprise and the impacts of COVID-19.

In October 2019, I attended and participated in the annual Social Enterprise World Forum (SEWF), which took place in Addis Ababa in Ethiopia. The Forum explored policy developments and brought together sector leaders, government officials and individual entrepreneurs.

This three-day event 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.

The Forum highlighted social enterprise developments from various countries, including Malaysia, South Africa, and Ghana, to name a few. In the discussions it was recognized that countries are at various stages in social enterprise policy development, but that despite the unique political and social contexts, there were also common conclusions: the success of social enterprises in any country depends on their ability to adapt to local circumstances, regardless of what supports may or may not be available.

Regarding broader policy development, it was noted that a key barrier to reform were governments themselves, which tend announce sweeping reforms in the social enterprise sector without following through with implementation measures (e.g. addressing regulatory barriers for charities to encourage revenue-generation). To address this, 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.

I had the opportunity to address the Forum and speak to Canada's Social Innovation and Social Finance 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 2021);
2. the related Investment Readiness Program (\$50M over 2 years, which sunsets in March 2021, 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 comprise 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.

### SEWF 2020 (September)

Last year's SEWF event was held online due to COVID-19. Known as "SEWF Digital", the global event took place over a 3-day period in September 2020. Participants at SEWF 2020 identified industry trends and implications across the globe in the wake of a global pandemic. Some of the key trends discussed were as follows:

#### *Trend 01- Co-working Spaces:*

- Coworking spaces are suddenly more important than ever as employees become accustomed to work from home, but also recognize the importance of company, support and community. Coworking spaces play an important role in helping with local economic recovery and provide community support to small organizations to fall back. SPOs will need social networks and local connections more than ever to regain their footing. During recovery, community support and networks will be important in helping people connect, build new networks and support each other.

#### *Trend 02- SPOs Pivoting to Survive*

- A vast majority of social purpose organizations have been forced to pivot in order to survive. Social enterprises are dealing with a variety of circumstances because of the pandemic, from sustaining operations during low demand, pivoting to provide new offerings, or aggressively growing to capture an increased demand for their services. What all these social enterprises have in common, is that they are requesting emergency funds for the short term to address these changes and challenges.

#### *Trend 03 – Social Procurement & Multi-Sector Partnerships*

- Pandemic recovery presents a unique and timely opportunity for the introduction and adoption of social procurement in the marketplace. Instead of purchasing supplies for the cheapest price internationally, governments (at all levels) may be incentivized to build a more resilient local economy to meet objectives in combination with procurement.
- Social procurement is often incorporated through explicit agreements such as Community Benefit Agreements (CBAs). These agreements are created between a coalition of community-based groups, the company and the government to identify community benefits through the infrastructure project (such as employment and skills for GBA+ communities). If there is no buy-in from construction companies, or other corporates to participate, then social procurement in Canada may lead to a difficult road ahead.

As some of you may know, this year's SEWF is expected to be held in Nova Scotia on June 2-4<sup>th</sup>, 2021. We of course hope that by then the event will be held in-person, but at any rate it is expected to attract up to 2000 social enterprise leaders, policy makers, private sector representatives, academics and practitioners from around the world.

I have no doubt that SEWF 2021 will continue to help in raising awareness of social enterprise developments internationally, with key lessons that can be shared both from a policy and a research perspective. With this in mind, I wish you a successful workshop on Work Integration Social Enterprises, and I look forward to learning more about the outcomes of your discussions today.



**Hughes Vaillancourt, ESDC – WISE, Social Policy**

Bonjour à vous toutes et tous présents virtuellement avec nous cet après-midi et merci de m'avoir invité.

As the acting Director General of Social Policy and on behalf of Catherine Adam, Senior Assistant Deputy Minister of SSPB, I have the privilege of leading the work on a number of policy priorities, including the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

I also understand and appreciate the importance of research in advancing policy development, program design and service delivery. Conducting longitudinal research is not an easy task, especially in the context of COVID, which, as I understand it, caused delays and perhaps setbacks for some participants. But this harsh context is also an opportunity to innovate and to capture not only the hardship and barriers faced by disadvantaged groups, but also their perseverance and resilience.

En effet, l'ordre du jour de cette deuxième journée de l'atelier reflète l'importance et la richesse des sujets de recherche qui y seront abordés. Vos recherches contribuent à une meilleure compréhension de l'importance que revêt le secteur des entreprises sociales d'insertion au travail dans les affaires sociales et économiques du Canada.

These projects have different focuses based on the expertise of their proponents, some focusing 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 Quebec, in major cities like Toronto and Montreal, and in small communities like Simcoe County Ontario, and Hazelton British Columbia.

ESDC and its Senior Management firmly believe in the importance of innovation in conducting research and of knowledge exchange as key ingredients for improving the sector and for building its capacities. And in today's context, the importance of rebuilding the capacity to support growth of social enterprises in general and WISEs in particular. In ESDC, we continue to believe in your innovative capabilities to formulate important research questions to address current and other persistent social and economic problems. The information and data you have collected and the knowledge you are sharing today are key for the development of WISEs in Canada and for our collective capacities to assess their social and economic impact and return on investments.

Je vous souhaite beaucoup de succès et des échanges fructueux.



## SESSION 1: COVID-19 AND WISE – LEADERS’ PERSPECTIVE

During the first session, many leaders of WISEs, who collaborate with the six research teams, presented their organization and addressed the challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. A question and answer period followed.

### **Steve Cordes, Youth Opportunities Unlimited, London (ON)**

Site Web: <https://www.you.ca>

Youth Opportunities Unlimited (YOU) supports youth to build their skills, confidence and independence to reach their potential. Youth ages 15-30 in London and Middlesex County can access the system of supports available at YOU. YOU provides five main services: Youth Centres (Youth Action and Next Wave), Youth Shelter, Housing Services, Career Services and Enterprises Services. Each of their social enterprises are under review primarily as a result of COVID-19, and include: recycling facility, food & beverage, contracted catering, gift baskets, woodshop.

COVID-19 had significant impacts. Recycling program is an essential service, and has carried on. But maintaining quality of service in a diminished revenue model has been a challenge. The offsite locations of food & beverage (e.g. cafés) are closed and relied heavily on takeout foods and catering services have almost disappeared. Thus there is a diminished capacity to train youth. For gift baskets some product line (jams & preserves) have actually increased significantly. Some challenges include logistics around supply chain management, e.g. short on jars & lids (as they are imported). For the woodshop, there is an increase in growth opportunities, e.g. partnership with London Middlesex Community Housing. As a supplier of kitchen cabinets, at the same time that they have diminished staffing, YOU has seen increased work orders.

Physical layouts of YOU spaces are impacted. The staff need to be assured that they are in a supportive environment while they continue to support young people who are higher risk. It has been managed, but it's been a level of distress & challenge for YOU.

Recruitment of youth has been a challenge. YOU have some training contracts but with fewer youth coming in, YOU is challenged to meet the output goals required by these contracts. Reduced capacity for training has led to lower output, and therefore reduced funding.

However, “shop local” has really pushed gift basket orders up (a few hundred percent). The young people engaged in the program are not only looking for employment support, they are looking at this as a mental health support (i.e. not necessarily turn to CERB). Youth really want to be at work, and nobody abandon YOU to collect CERB without working. YOU has adjusted their policies to allow and encourage them to take time off when they pose a risk to others.

Overall, donations are up and were able to pivot the foods and beverage business. As a training organization, it is not possible to do à la carte ordering. So, for special events, YOU is able to offer a “dine around the world” series. Young people are getting the better experience of working towards, say, a Ukrainian meal. The loyalty of the customer base has gone up. This has allowed YOU to reposition how they do sales. Customers trust YOU and are willing to pay a premium, and they choose to invest in the social

footprint. YOU can align the sales with the community engagement team. For YOU, sales is an expression of support of the organization and this can tell a stronger story.

**Elsbeth McKay, Operation Come Home / Opération rentrer au foyer, Ottawa (ON)**

Website: <http://operationcomehome.ca>

Operation Come Home (OCH) work with vulnerable youth in Ottawa, serving 500 people annually. OCH is preventing homeless youth from becoming homeless adults. The focus is on helping young people break the cycle of poverty, by finishing high school, going to college /university, or finding jobs. The majority of services are in the area of community economic development. OCH also provides wraparound supports, including housing, mental health and addictions services and has two social enterprises: Bottleworks, a free commercial and residential bottle pick up service, and Foodworks, a catering service.

Bottleworks has taken off since the pandemic started. It was pivoted from picking up empty alcohol bottles, from restaurants, into the residential sector. Community members were asked to be team captains: collect bottles, store them, and then when we can pick them up, they contact us (i.e. residential pickups). OCH also worked with community associations in Ottawa. The enterprise is lucrative now. And is expanding by getting a third vehicle.

Foodworks had to close down, but recently reopened, pivoting to takeout and pickup. It is also severed from OCH and is now a for-profit business, and an “incubator” (primarily for private sector businesses). A red seal chef helps out, and prepares meals with OCH’s youth for the youths that go to OCH. They also prepare meals to sell via OCH’s takeout window in the new facility that we’ve rented.

OCH has just completed a new strategic plan. They put out a survey asking what kind of food, and what prices locals want. They are also offering space for a farmer’s market. Among the challenges, youth at OCH were laid off as a result of the pandemic as operations were shut down in March 2020. They have had difficulty placing their youth in the types of jobs they want because of COVID. Some operations have pivoted to virtual delivery, such as their high school, and some mental health and employment services as well. In March 2020, the staff was asked to develop their own reintegration plans, e.g. how staff were going to work both virtually and face to face during the pandemic. Door delivery started in May, and all staff returned to OCH at the end of August. None had contracted COVID by the day of the ESDC Workshop.

OCH developed policies to support staff during COVID. Staff get 10 “pandemic” sick days, in addition to their regular sick days, if needed. OCH lost about \$500,000 in fundraising in 2020 as a result of shutdowns out of their budget of \$2M or 25%. However, donations are up significantly and that has been very helpful. Largest challenge has been for street/homeless youth, who have nowhere to go.

**Pascale Corriveau, Pro-Prêt, Montréal (QC)**

Website: <https://propret.org/>

Based in Montréal, Pro-Prêt (PP) promotes socio-occupational integration and development through the development of economic activities. The services are centred on commercial cleaning and general building maintenance. Each year, about 110 to 130 people benefit from a work integration experience, with \$1.7M in training grants given out. Their economic activities have not declined this year despite challenges.

More people dropped out in this period than PP normally loses in a typical year. It took a while to understand why, but participants faced high pressures from families (regarding health concerns, i.e. COVID-19), despite all prevention measures established. Those that are coming back are more fragile: in 2018-19, mental health was a challenge for 31%; today it is 49% and this produces challenges for work integration social enterprise. PP also see higher substance abuse: alcohol, harder drugs. So, the clientele is more fragile and more supports are needed.

The big challenges during COVID were: economic challenges, procurement issues, and lower economic activities. The first three months (March - May 2020) were incredibly difficult. Many nonprofits have closed their doors, there were lower government supports in some areas, higher delays in others (government), which enhanced the fragility of the clientele. There were also dropouts. PP really feel the weakening of social supports.

PP also see many youth with families with many challenges. PP insisted on providing in person meeting with clients which is important to succeed in the long run. This is especially true for people with mental health challenges, linguistic challenges (e.g. unilingual). Teams were restructured (changed hours, etc.) to help provide in-person services where a camera is simply not enough.

For PP, the big challenge has been the price hike in procurement, the need to pivot/adapt, and to ensure additional supports are provided elsewhere. Most employees work 30 hours a week, but some were asked to add more hours to ensure coordination of services. The biggest impact for PP isn't the service delivery, but the more vulnerable client base as a result of COVID-19.

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

Website: <https://www.storytellersfoundation.org/general-2>

Youth Works (YW) supports employment for youth on Gitksan territory (Indigenous) in British Columbia and is based in Hazelton (approximately 3 hours east of Prince Rupert). YW launched 12 years ago, driven with a mission to: improve access to healthy food in the community; and improve access to employment. YW has a small kitchen catering program for youth, 18-30 years old.

When COVID hit (March 2020), the manager was preparing to move on to other ventures and 2 youth were employed. The plan was to take a break and then send the youth back to work with the new manager. But, this turned into a 4-month shutdown, and then opened and remained open. In August 2020, a new manager was hired. It took a while to develop a cohesive work plan because the government health measures kept changing. However, YW received some rural dividend funding which helped to adapt to

COVID needs, and also received funding from Red Cross. YW has restarted on-the-land programming and has gotten out to their gardens to help feed elders in the community.

Numerous challenges could be cited. The pandemic increased the strain on staff. YW kept their doors open, and offers front line services to their communities: food security, literacy needs, youth mental health. Ensuring overall staff safety and well-being, to ensure ongoing production and meet needs of staff has been a challenge. Many of their clients for catering have shut down, so there is reduced demand. On the strategy dimension, YW shifted from a 3-year business plan to a 6 month business plan, allowing them to be more responsive (and more rapidly shift). Trying to find ways to work together when people are feeling isolated; keeping staff connected while keeping each other safe has been an ongoing challenge.

They are working hard to help the community with mental health needs and lost some past participants to overdoses. However, some benefits came with adaptation. The model has shifted to become a more human-centred business plan.

All YW activities are focused on youth wellness and staff wellness. They plan to hire another youth in the summer and are developing a take-out menu and pre-made meals. They were able to open up and make wreaths for Christmas, and that was their busiest time of the year and received comments from the community that YW is a beacon of hope.

### **Richard Gravel, Collectif des entreprises d'insertion du Québec, Montréal (QC)**

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

The Collectif des entreprises d'insertion du Québec (CEIQ) is the Quebec collective of work integration enterprises. The CEIQ has a mission to support the social and occupational integration of people in vulnerable situations and to contribute to the growth of integration enterprises and their unique model.

Although the CEIQ is based in Montreal, its organizations are spread throughout Quebec's 14 administrative regions in both urban and rural areas.

The CEIQ comprises 50 WISEs and the network faces various problems during COVID-19. The pandemic forced CEIQ to change and to develop quick responses to the various community needs. A lot of work involved the analysis of sanitary norms, as well as what grants / information could be relay. Challenges associated to COVID-19 were described under 3 themes: commercial, training and personnel management.

On the commercial dimension, WISEs have to be self-sufficient and need to sustain themselves via their activities and revenue. During COVID-19, some WISEs stopped their production. Some were forced to adjust or realign their activities (i.e. retain a level to keep training workers), such as restaurants and cleaning services. These organizations were called on to respond to community demands, so there was a challenge to realign activities: the production of masks and PPE for hospitals.

Training activities were adjusted, as well as training employees to undertake new activities. The level of stress and anxiety of employees has risen; some have dropped out. Other stress factors related to keeping oneself safe during the pandemic. While this is OK for videoconferencing, it was quickly realized that there are limits to camera-based

interactions. This is especially salient for the training plans of individuals with mental health issues. Some training opportunities can be given via Zoom, but prevention work quickly focused on in-person training opportunities.

Personnel management brings an issue for those individuals returning to work during COVID-19. Many WISEs saw this as an additional stress factor, given that the recruitment of employees during COVID is extremely more complex – a videoconference-based activities/services is not ideal.

## Questions & Answers

### 1. What is the focus for future adaptations? What are your other concerns?

**Anissa.** I think the Community Economic development mindset is very helpful, as the main issues we see are those that create stress and anxiety. So for Bottleworks, seeing challenges as opportunities is very good. That said, I am worried about funding and how the landscape will change for small social enterprise / social justice organizations. Advocacy groups need to speak up to government.

**Pascale.** I see the funding issue as very important. Will governments be more or less flexible during more COVID times? The issues we see are very complex and we need more flexibility from government.

**Elsbeth.** I find the smaller organizations will be really struggling, but I think that governments can/should get more products based on social procurement policies. If they don't have those policies changed, to make things easier for SMEs (to provide products and services), then make sure there are some "anchor" purchasers that you can rely on in your own communities.

**Richard.** Regarding financing, I think it will be important to put measures (programs) that help new organizations, especially those who respond to meeting community demands. The Government should invest into new organizations, but also existing organizations to give them some air, restructure their activities, especially over the next 2-3 year period. We barely see the long-term impacts of the pandemic: dropouts, poverty rates (higher).

### 2. Regarding increasing donations, is this a temporary fix? Or are you looking for other long-term efforts and investments made in the community that shouldn't just be a 'one time crisis' moment, but something more permanent?

**Steve.** To me, everything boils down to vision and values. The more the SE does to support its community (grow local, be local), the longer its impact.

**Elsbeth.** A diversified portfolio is very important – including donations from corporations, the funding of which was not solicited, but sent as a gift. That is an anomaly for Operation Come Home. We also have a seasoned fundraising person who has made a significant change in how we ask for funds, the way in which we do it, what we're asking for... most of the funds coming from individuals, e-letter campaigns. We've also received gifts from wealthy individuals, but I'm not going to hold my breath. I would recommend as wide & diverse portfolio as possible.

### 3. Did the existing government programs help you?

**Anissa.** For Youthworks, our main goal was for that our revenues would cover our wages, and then outside of that we seek other sources of funding. At this time we are establishing a learning shop as a nonprofit so that we can get donations. But we are a small organization and we don't have that capacity just yet.

**Steve.** For us, we've operated a SE when there's no government funding, and vice-versa. When government funding is placed, we get more out of it in training. But when government doesn't fund, then our scale for training drops significantly. And the SE is very often very much a platform for employment; sometimes we access placement programs, but that SE framework is what starts off their journey. The adjustment to work is their limit. Without government funding, that component is significantly hurt. Government pays its share of training and we think they have a responsibility to train Canadians. Without that, we have far fewer youth because we cannot afford to train youth 2 days a week, which may be their best platform.

**Pascale.** Québec's funding. A package of gloves for PPE is now \$40 (rather than \$17, before the pandemic). This is a huge economic impact and we have no donations for this. But, finally, government funding from QC did come in. I think that other SEs (more fragile) may be less fortunate than us.

### 4. If I think about the procurement question, has there been more sensitivity to organizations that are more unique?

**Pascale.** At first, everything we needed wasn't available because the procurement policies at the beginning of the pandemic was focused on supporting the health care system. Then the prices went up, which is problematic because yes, we are a social enterprise, but we are also a non-profit. And the quantities we need are much higher than others, so we're forced to adjust while balancing the security & safety of people. It doesn't matter if we are non-profit. We had to be very creative to find PPE in a situation where Government was requisitioning them for the health care sector.

**Richard.** Previously, our network partnered to do group purchasing in order to sustain our procurement needs and to solve our problems. But as Pascale mentioned, the crisis prevented us from getting equipment that was requisitioned by government: masks, gloves. But one of the elements of the solution is to get a more common vision for how to get procurement, which will sometimes get better prices, but more importantly to maintain networks.

### 5. Have any other SEs relied on federal wage subsidies?

**Anissa.** We opted not to, just because of the level of work involved. We are finding ourselves to be very flexible. Working in Gitxkaan community, there are protocols around deaths, and so we're finding that deaths have not stopped – so we need our staff to take time off. I'm curious to see if we can access federal wage subsidies now, but we chose not to at the beginning of the pandemic.



**6. What have been the impacts of Government programs on staff? Have there been different repercussions between WISE employees and 'regular' employees?**

**Steve.** We found a systemic barrier in our shop through COVID, because our staff dipped into the extra sick time entitlements. They could have requested a leave of absence during the emergency pandemic. If we closed our food/beverage sites that would have put our people out of work. We did in fact make use of the CEWS program which allowed us to carry on in a smaller scale, without laying anybody off.

**7. What's the lesson learned (main) from COVID?**

**Steve.** For us, everything is mission values. We are already pretty good at that, we're close to where we were a year ago: the organization is rocking. The staff teams in our SEs talked about how much \$ we made from jam, how much catering sales, how many sales... that's not the purpose of our SEs. These things are valuable, but the focus is the mission: youth training, etc. Using this as a framework as a success, not only from internally, but communicating it externally.

**Elsbeth.** It's OK to close down a business, and for the right reasons. It might not be because of the pandemic (could be another reason, such as seasonal work). So I agree with Steve – we need to know / remind ourselves why we need SEs (revenue to pay for operations). The money we made for Bottleworks helps subsidize activities to employ vulnerable youth. If we can't do that, I'm happy to shut something down and start something else.

**Pascale.** Openness, creativity, flexibility... especially for WISEs. We need to accommodate people where they are in order to help them get to where they be. There is a space for everyone, but we need to make time to adjust in whatever way in order to help meet individuals' needs.

**Alissa.** Take care of your people, is our lesson learned. Build our financial capital in order to sustain our social capital. Shifting how you think is really important, and being human-centred. I think that's what's kept us going, and being willing to be resilient and adaptable. Challenges will pass, and so being willing to use that & focusing on keeping our people safe has been our main thing.

**Richard.** The capacity of adaptation of organizations, is what I realized. I also think there's a lesson on diversification. Organizations that focus on 1 activity have had more difficulties to change, than those who have 2-3 activities. So, that broader vision development is a key lesson learned, and to have the flexibility based on differing needs. And last, networking. We have really allowed organizations to work with one another, share lessons learned & best practices, give training (online), and to co-inspire each other on training that helps employees in training. I think these are the important lessons that will help good practices for SEs and WISEs.



## SESSION 2: PRESENTATION BY THE INSTITUTE ON GOVERNANCE

During this session, David Murchison from the Institute on Governance presented the results of a report<sup>2</sup> funded by ESDC. The text that follows summarizes that report.

This study set out to examine the implications of COVID-19 on the civil society sector and determine the lessons learned to date, how a sample of the sector have responded, and seek input on what actions might need to be considered by government to best position CSOs for the future.

The research is qualitative with a total 16 organizations surveyed through hour long, structured interviews (November 3-20, 2020), generally with the Executive Director (or equivalent). The sample focused on those CSOs serving vulnerable groups, which for study's purposes include: persons with disabilities; women; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer or questioning (LGBTQ); Indigenous people; youth; and seniors.

The impact of COVID 19 on those surveyed is significant and organizations were forced to make substantive changes to their ways of doing business. The ability to move services/programming to an on-line environment was important to success. Those that were more successful had existing on-line activities, fewer capacity constraints in resourcing and easier businesses to transform. Those organizations that relied on fundraising as a significant share of their total revenue have faced particular challenges. Traditional models (e.g. breakfast fundraisers), have all but disappeared and on-line/virtual models have been challenging for most, as they seek new ways to raise money. Federal government programs have been important but much more important to some than to others. The most widely used program has been the wage subsidy (CEWS).

Partnerships and collaborations have been important but most indicated that they have deepened relationships rather than forged new ones. Of significance has been the sharing of information with "sister/in sub-sector" organizations as challenges were confronted and lessons learned and shared. Organizations surveyed are generally optimistic about the future and confident they can meet their medium-term priorities.

That's said, respondents indicated underlying concerns about the sector and its sustainability once COVID specific funding ends. This is compounded by a sense that some vulnerable populations' needs are not being met as the sectors' responses to COVID, while heroic, are not fully meeting all those in need. COVID has necessitated change and many of these changes should be encouraged. Historically, the Not-for-Profit /charitable sector has been slower to innovate and adapt to technological change than the private sector.

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<sup>2</sup> Murchison, D., Edgar, L., Roszell, B. (2021). *COVID-19 Challenge, Change and Innovation in Canadian Civil Society*, Final Report Submitted to ESDC, Ottawa: Institute on Governance, January 22, 31p.

The main recommendation is to develop a strategy that supports the long-term sustainability of the sector. These might include:

- Promoting information sharing across the sector that draws on lessons learned and innovative solutions (conferences, workshops etc.)
- Developing or access to training that promotes innovative practices and technological tools and how to use them
- Those Government of Canada programs supporting the sustainability of for-profit sectors be extended to the charitable/not-for-profit sector
- That one federal department be responsible for the sectors health
- Get better data for the sector

### **SESSION 3: GROUP DISCUSSION AND REFLECTIONS ON COVID-19**

The workshop was attended by practitioners, researchers, government stakeholders and outside experts from partner organizations, including social enterprises, universities, the public service, civil society and the community.

They addressed some topics during the brief group discussion. For example, questions regarding the Institute on Governance's study methodology and the availability of the report prepared by the Institute on Governance, as well as the question of government interventions and the federal government's coordination role, and also the role that ESDC might play. How to build a public strategy that mobilizes the resources of the three levels of government? The division of powers between the federal and provincial governments means that few interventions can be carried out directly by the federal government in Quebec—the emergency income security program during the pandemic provided assistance—but after the pandemic, how can the federal government be involved in the whole process of rebuilding and consolidating the sector?

It is important to note that WISEs have played an important role in some sectors and have demonstrated the strength of this social and economic network. How should governments and other funders assist companies in the forward-looking reorganization? It is suggested that governments will need to be involved in assisting and supporting WISEs over the long term. Some WISEs used their flexibility to contribute to the collective effort. There will be a need to build back this flexibility in the future.

COVID-19 has significantly affected WISEs and the already fragile clients they serve. The size of organizations seems to have influenced reactions. The social enterprises that had to deal with the consequences of COVID-19 showed agility in adapting to the challenges identified by both the leaders and the Institute on Governance's study.

Certainly, there were many negative consequences from the closure of certain activities. In particular, there were financial consequences in terms of lost revenues, increased costs and philanthropic, contractual or government funding with targets to be met in a very different context. Logistically speaking, supply chain issues resulted from the scarcity of a number of supplies, the obligations imposed by health measures, and the considerable physical and organizational disorganization of WISEs. Continuing to provide an essential service while respecting employees' health results in major implications for human resources, including higher stress levels, technical difficulties and work-life balance. The complexity and difficulty

of building interpersonal relationships and trust with clients over time is not ideal, and may even be impossible, in a virtual environment.

However, there are also positive consequences. The pandemic has shown the agility of social enterprises. Some WISEs were able to reinvent or modify their business model and organizational practices very quickly. Solidarity and mutual aid were important.

The pandemic affected already fragile clients. For example, consider the collapse of their social network, feelings of abandonment, trust relationships that need to be continually nurtured, and physical constraints combined with the need for in-person, not just virtual, contact. The mental health of everyone, both clients and staff, should not be overlooked, even if it is difficult to assess.

While inspiring, there is some concern among clients about the long-term viability of WISEs. Poverty and dropouts on many levels seem to be worsening. As a society, we must give ourselves the means to achieve our future ambitions.

### **SESSION 4: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS TO DATE**

During this session, there were presentations on longitudinal research and the results to date from the six research teams. The studies began in 2017 or 2018 and are expected to end in 2022.

#### **Justine Hodgson-Bautista & Ashley Rostamian, Université of Toronto**

Justine Hodgson-Bautista and Ashley Rostamian presented the research project “WISE Project for Training At-Risk Youth”. The goal is to follow youth 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 for 3 years. The research objectives are to: 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 the 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). Interviews with a portion of the participants are underway. 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 628 people aged 17-35 who are going to training, and who experience a number of barriers. Follow-ups and the response rate was 48% for the 2-year follow-up for non-social enterprises and 64% for social enterprises. 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.

Additional questions to follow-ups in Spring 2020 to address COVID-19 pandemic. Preliminary follow-up (6-month, 1-year and 2-year) findings include slight overall reduction in some measures of vulnerability for SE group. COVID-19 is worsening food situation for SE group more than non-SE. 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, addiction support), as compared to the non-SE group. SE participants experience greater reduction in proportion regarding different instrumental employment barriers at 6-month and 1-year follow-up, as compared to changes among the non-SE participants. At 2-year follow-up, some of these barriers increase in greater proportion for the SE group, as compared to the non-SE group. The 3-year follow-up is underway and will end in January 2022.

Increased safety protocols has been a challenge due to lack of contingency plans. Participants wellbeing – mental health has been greatest challenge due to stress, isolation, health and safety, insecurity. Have all demonstrated flexibility and resilience, online trainings, participants that still do show up have had strong sense of community and sense of belonging. It is important to develop strong relationships early; during covid, those who had strong relationships could be connected with easier.

### **Jean-Marc Fontan, Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM)**

Jean-Marc Fontan presented the research project “Effectiveness of WISEs working with young adults in Montréal: a longitudinal study.” The purpose of the study is to understand what the training offered by WISEs brings to its participants (on several levels) and to show the effectiveness of this training for 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 individuals participating in a WISE training program, and develop WISE reflexivity and self-assessment capacity.

This is a partnership approach between practitioners and researchers. Statistical data provided by WISEs, questionnaires (participant assessment tools used by WISEs, follow-up on the study, quality of life) and interviews are part of the methodology used. These tools were developed with the partners. After the consultation with test groups and the development of the protocol and forms, questionnaires are used at the beginning of the project and afterwards for follow-up purposes. 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), Pro-prêt (industrial cleaning).

The selection and retention of WISEs are unstable due to high turnover among leaders of WISEs. An initial sample of 152 individuals in social integration completed a WISE program and the number of participants still active is 75. Participants are between 18 and 65 years old (26% are over 36 years old).

A wellness assessment that continues to improve slightly at Times 3 despite an already high score at Times 2. Two profiles (1=in consolidation, 2=more stable) are established at Times 3 with differences in financial evaluation, abilities and wellness. Some variables show significant differences between the two profiles, i.e. dropping out of school in high school or earlier (1=68%, 2=43%), having children (1=26%, 2=57%), not employed before participating in the WISE pathway (1=100%, 2=78%), currently receiving government financial support (1=26%, 2=0%).

There are differing realities in the labour market pre- and post-COVID-19. Post-COVID, there is an acceleration of the 'digital revolution'; SMEs and the community sector are particularly affected. An increase in inequalities in access to employment, impacts on mental health and the need for public policies on economic recovery / sectoral conversion / requalification of the workforce with attention to those furthest from the labour market.

### **Mike Toye, CCEDnet/RCDÉC**

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.

Over the past year, this has evolved: working with the Hospitality Workers Training Centre (HWTC) (Hawthorne), to invite their trainees to participate in Year 2 & Year 3 surveys and updating research approaches and instruments to capture experiences of racial discrimination as well as address COVID-related challenges for community research team, WISEs, comparison group referral organizations and research study participants.

The study has 139 participants for the 5 WISE partners. They are new employees of participating WISEs who consent to be part of the study. The study has 146 individuals in the comparison group. The aim was to have similar characteristics, i.e., individual who is



homeless or at risk of homelessness; 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.

Data for 2-year survey was collected between September 2020 and January 2021. Differences exist regarding changes in employment at 2-year follow-up between participants and comparison group. Employment was affected by COVID-19, as more participants have lost jobs / remain unemployed, have reduction of hours. COVID-19 affected participants negatively with lower physical or mental health, lower personal or family circumstances and lower social or community support system and positively with income, financial situation and housing. COVID-19 presents challenges with increased safety protocols, reduced intake, participants' well-being, mental health, housing insecurity, reduced/lost employment, food insecurities. However, success includes flexibility and resilience, sense of community & security and pride in being an essential worker.

### **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 (46), 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.

Additional questions to 2-year follow-up to address COVID-19 pandemic and distinguish pre-COVID and post-COVID. Almost half has no change due to COVID-19, while there were some reduction of hours, lost job but have since be rehired, lost job and remain unemployed, and some unable to work due to COVID-related challenges. COVID-19 affected participants regarding social or community support system, personal or family circumstances, income and physical or mental health.

### **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 (March 2019 – October 2020) of 88%. Time 3 data collection started in September 2020 is ongoing until April 2022. Retaining participants for up to 3 years with limited contact in between is challenging, but possible. Qualitative interviews (22) were completed in July-December 2020.

No significant changes from baseline to 18-month follow-up on SF-36 health survey scale (exception Social Subscale – significant decline), while most subscales remain considerably below national norms (exception Pain Subscale). No change in other indicators of well-being from baseline to 18-month follow-up (satisfaction with Life Scale, Empowerment Scale, Reported Substance Use). Many WISE workers face issues that are not unique to WISEs due to the nature of work sector. Choice to move from WISE to community employment is multi-layered.

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



**Shawn de Raaf, SRDC/SRSA-ON**

Shawn de Raaf 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 2-year follow-up survey.

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.

Preliminary results of the 1-year follow-up survey indicate that over half of SASS cohort are still students; among participants who are not students, over half are not working and large majority of employment is part-time. Regarding Housing – nearly 2/3 of participants still live with their parents (not surprising given their age around 21 years old), but nearly 50% of the participants were at least somewhat worried about their housing situation moving forward. Results indicate a high degree of food insecurity – concerns about access to healthy and nutritious food due to lack of money or other resources. The 2-year follow-up is underway and includes questions about impact of COVID-19 on employment, personal well-being, and community support systems, and captures participants’ experiences of racism and other forms of discrimination.

## **ADDITIONAL REFLECTIONS AND POSSIBILITIES**

Based on all the presentations, it is clear that work integration social enterprises have been affected by COVID-19. Among the lessons learned from the presentations and the workshop, it is clear that WISEs have responded to the challenges of the pandemic by adapting with noteworthy agility. Managers, employees, WISEs clients and social enterprise clients alike have proven able to navigate an ever-changing environment with the health measures imposed and the pandemic's evolving impact on societal life. The various presentations during the two-day workshop reflected similar impacts and responses in the various WISEs across the country. As mentioned, the consequences are not only negative, but also positive in some instances.

This section offers additional reflection on the research program and proposes possibilities to be explored in the next phases. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, it is important to recognize the fragility of WISEs and the additional challenges for longitudinal studies. The research teams have incorporated the new reality into their research design to distinguish between pre- and post-COVID data.

The first two questions of this research program focus on the effectiveness of WISEs in promoting the social and labour market integration of vulnerable individuals, and which WISE models and training program formats work best. It is too early to determine the answers to these questions. It is best to wait for the final reports from each research team to get a full picture of the work done and the results achieved. However, a summary of all the results should be prepared in order to propose practices that should be eliminated, maintained, encouraged or revised. Thus, it will be possible to identify lessons learned and the type of partnerships worth considering. The final reports from the various research teams will provide a better understanding of three dimensions of work: the work itself, the skills of the workforce, and the workplaces.

The third question is about the government's financial return on WISEs. Although the financial return is important, calculations should take into account the full range of benefits and costs in order to determine the savings. For a WISE program beneficiary, this may mean several dimensions involving different departments. For example, the program may contribute to their employability (new paid job and taxes paid, decrease in or disappearance of social assistance benefits), an increase in skills (education budget), a decrease in physical and mental health costs (health budget), an increase in self-esteem or an increase in the individual's quality of life and that of their family members and friends (peace of mind).

The COVID-19 pandemic has enhanced the need for a holistic approach at many levels. This question should consider overall performance for all stakeholders in society and by all levels of government (federal, provincial, territorial, regional and municipal), not just the federal government. Though this type of calculation is not easy, more effort at this level is a step in the right direction for better quantification of benefits and costs.

Overall performance should include more than the financial component. Environmental, social and governance (ESG) criteria should be considered. For example, the work done by a WISE can result in cost savings in social programs, reduced environmental impacts through recycling of goods, increased financial literacy and improved governance with reports to the community on actions taken.

In this performance assessment, it may be worth incorporating the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in particular as they relate to the Canadian Strategy towards 2030<sup>3</sup>. Some of these goals are especially prevalent in certain WISEs. Some of these goals are present in certain WISEs associated with the research teams.

(SDGs: #1 No poverty; #2 Zero hunger; #3 Good health and well-being; #4 Quality education; #5 Gender equality; #6 Clean water and sanitation; #7 Affordable and clean energy; #8 Decent work and economic growth; #9 Industry, innovation and infrastructure; #10 Reduced inequality; #11 Sustainable cities and communities; #12 Responsible consumption and production; #13 Climate action; #14 Life below water; #15 Life on land; #16 Peace and justice strong institutions; #17 Partnerships)



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<sup>3</sup> Government of Canada. (2019). *Towards Canada's 2030 Agenda National Strategy*, No.: SDG-001-07-19E, Sustainable Development Goals Unit at Employment and Social Development Canada, 47p. (online). <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/agenda-2030/national-strategy.html>

There may also be a reconsideration of the government's role and the funding model for social enterprises and WISEs, as suggested by Loney and Braun<sup>4</sup>. They propose adopting a new model of relationships that focuses on solutions rather than problems, and replacing the type of funding between WISEs and governments (see Table 1). Their book contains several examples.

Table 1 – Replacement of the Funding Approach and Model

Problem-making Funding	Problem-solving Community Based Outcome Purchasing
Power is with government and big business.	Communities are empowered.
Solutions remain small scale so human and financial costs of problems grow.	Solutions can be scaled. Government becomes more affordable. Problems have met their match.
Financial benefits delivered by non-profits are not valued economically.	Social enterprise outcomes are valued and purchased.
"No margin, no mission"	Non-profits earn surplus which they will reinvest in ramping up solutions.
Non-profits remain "breathing fumes" of the economy	Non-profits become entrepreneurial by valuing and then selling outcomes.
Government is a funder.	Government is a customer.
Government manages problems (big expensive bureaucracies).	Government's new role is to make it easy for problem-solvers.
Compliance based (high admin, inflexible)	Outcomes focused (low admin, flexibility)
Government maintains political and monetary risk if something goes wrong.	Impact investors take on risk instead of government.
Non-profits to government: "Will you please give us some funding so we can do something good?"	Non-profits to government: "Will you agree to save money?"

Source: Loney et Braun (2018, p.63, 127)

This shift in approach and funding model from expense reimbursement to outcome-based purchasing should include the elimination of administrative, legal and regulatory barriers. This change could be combined with greater effort in social procurement, including enhanced bid evaluations where WISEs are present and included. It is important to have consistency in all policies and coordination of public policy across all levels of government (federal, provincial, territorial, regional and municipal).

<sup>4</sup> Loney, S., Braun, W. (2018). *The Beautiful Bailout: How a Social Innovation Scale-up Will Solve Government's Priciest Problems*, Winnipeg: Encompass, 144p.

Some research needs may also be suggested for the future. Governments in Canada should further invest in conducting research nationally. For example, this could easily mesh with the ICSEM's<sup>5</sup> extensive international work on social enterprises funded by Belgium. Canada can draw lessons from what is being done in other countries. For example, the 2016 special issue of the journal *Nonprofit Policy Forum*<sup>6</sup> includes several experiences in the United States, Ireland, Japan, Switzerland and Austria dealing with public policy<sup>7</sup>.

Similar to some of the work done by the European Commission<sup>8</sup>, it would be worthwhile to provide an overview of all stakeholders in Canada's social enterprise ecosystem, in particular that of WISEs. In so doing, it would be interesting to globally position the business models, public policy frameworks, legal constraints including tax incentives and financing measures for WISEs, to complement what has been done in part for social enterprises in general<sup>9</sup>. In addition, internal and external constraints enabling start up and scale-up could be highlighted. This overview could be seen in the broader context of the charitable and nonprofit sector's need for information<sup>10</sup>. The need for data is not unique to this sector or to WISEs<sup>11</sup>.

The stories told by WISEs in workshops over the past three years deserve to be acknowledged on a broader scale. WISEs deserve to be better known by public decision-makers and the general public. There could be small case studies showcasing them and describing the impact of their actions on society. The passion demonstrated is undeniable and the results are apparent. Despite the difficulties, work to identify, map and measure<sup>12</sup> the impact<sup>13</sup> of WISEs is an avenue worth pursuing. It is therefore important to continue and to encourage collective work<sup>14</sup> to improve the way social purpose organizations measure their impact.

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<sup>5</sup> ICSEM (International Comparative Social Enterprise Models) project. (online). <http://iap-socent.be/icsem-transversal-publications>.

<sup>6</sup> Cooney, K., Nyssens, M. (dir.). (2016). Special issue on Work Integration Social Enterprise, *Nonprofit Policy Forum*, 7(4), December.

<sup>7</sup> Cooney, K., Nyssens, M., O'Shaughnessy, M., Defourny, J. (2016). Public Policies and Work Integration Social Enterprises: The Challenge of Institutionalization in a Neoliberal Era, *Nonprofit Policy Forum*, 7(4), 415–433.

<sup>8</sup> European Commission. (2015). *A map of social enterprises and their eco-systems in Europe – Synthesis Report*, Brussels: Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission, 169p. (online). <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=12987&langId=en>.

<sup>9</sup> McMurtry, J.J., Brouard, F. (2015). Social Enterprises in Canada: An Introduction and Brouard, F., McMurtry, J.J. (2015). Les entreprises sociales au Canada: Un bref exposé. *ANSERJ – Canadian journal of Nonprofit and Social Economy Research / Revue canadienne de recherche sur les OSBL et l'économie sociale*, 6(1), 6–17 and 18–23.

<sup>10</sup> Senate of Canada. (2019). *Catalyst for Change: A Roadmap to a Stronger Charitable Sector*. Report of the Special Senate Committee on the Charitable Sector, June. ACCS (2020). *The Advisory Committee on the Charitable Sector (ACCS) website*. (en ligne) <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/programs/about-canada-revenue-agency-cra/corporate-reports-information/advisory-committee-charitable-sector.html>; Brouard, F., Lenczner, M., Patzelt, A. (2020). *Report on 2020 T3010 Research Group ACCS/CSDWG Consultation*, Discussion paper, Sprott Centre for Social Enterprises / Centre Sprott pour les entreprises sociales (SCSE/CSES), Sprott School of Business, Carleton University, December, 23p.

<sup>11</sup> Wolfson, M. Without good data, we're flying blind on health care, *The Ottawa Citizen*, March 27, p. B2.

<sup>12</sup> Holt, D., Littlewood, D. (2015). Identifying, Mapping and Monitoring the Impact of Hybrid Firms. *California Management Review*, 57(3), 107–125.

<sup>13</sup> Dufour, B. (2015). State of the art in social impact measurement: methods for work integration social enterprises measuring their impact in a public context. *5th EMES International Research Conference on Social Enterprise: "Building a scientific field to foster the social enterprise eco-system"*, EMES, Helsinki, Finland, June. (online). <https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01458730/document>.

<sup>14</sup> The Common Approach to Impact Measurement. (online). <https://www.commonapproach.org/>.

### **CONCLUSION FOR THE WORKSHOP**

François Brouard ended the day by thanking the participants, as well as everyone who presented on one of the two days of the online workshop. He extended special thanks to the workshop organizers, including all ESDC staff involved in the organization, simultaneous interpretation and seamless technical support.

Patrick Bussière thanked the participants for attending and is already planning the 2022 session.



## APPENDIX A – MEETING AGENDA

### 2021 Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISEs) Workshop



Date: Wednesday, February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021  
Time: 1:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.  
Location: On-Line

### **Agenda Day 1**

12:30 – 13:00	Login/troubleshooting
13:00 – 13:15	<b>Introduction and Setting the Agenda</b> Patrick Bussière, Director, Social Research, ESDC <b>Introductory remarks</b> Janet Goulding, Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Income Security and Social Development Branch, ESDC <b>Setting the agenda</b> François Brouard, Carleton University (facilitator for the day)
13:15 – 14:40	<b>Session 1: COVID-19 and WISEs</b> <i>Leaders' perspective</i>  Steve Cordes, Youth Opportunities Unlimited, London, Ontario Elspeth McKay, Operation Come Home, Ottawa, Ontario Pascale Corriveau, Pro-Prêt, Montréal, Québec Anissa Watson, Youth Works, Hazelton, Colombie-Britannique Richard Gravel, Collectif des entreprises d'insertion du Québec, Québec
14:40 – 14:50	Break
14:50 – 15:05	<b>Session 2: Presentation by the Institute on Governance</b> <i>COVID-19 Challenge, Change and Innovation in Canadian Civil Society</i>  David Murchison, Senior Vice president, Institute on Governance
15:05 – 15:25	<b>Session 3: Group Discussion</b>  <i>All</i> Facilitator - François Brouard, Carleton University
15:25 – 15:30	<b>Conclusion for Day 1</b>  François Brouard, Carleton University Patrick Bussière, Director, Social Research, ESDC



**2021 Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISEs) Workshop**



Date: Thursday, February 11th, 2021  
Time: 1:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.  
Location: On-Line

**Agenda  
Day 2**

12:30 – 13:00	Login/troubleshooting
13:00 – 13:10	<b>Introduction and Setting the Agenda</b> Patrick Bussière, Director, Social Research, ESDC <b>Introductory remarks</b> Hughes Vaillancourt, Acting Director general, Social Policy Directorate, ESDC <b>Setting the agenda</b> François Brouard, Carleton University (facilitator for the day)
13:10 – 14:10	<b>Session 4a: <i>Presentation of Findings to Date</i></b>  <b><i>WISE Project for Training At-Risk Youth</i></b> Jasmine Hodgson-Bautista & Ashley Rostamian, OISE <b><i>The Effectiveness of WISE Working with Young Adults in Montreal : A Longitudinal Study</i></b> Jean-Marc Fontan, UQAM <b><i>Alleviating Homelessness: WISE Research</i></b> Mike Toye, CCEDnet <b><i>Discussion – final 15 minutes</i></b>
14:10 – 14:20	Break
14:20 – 15:20	<b>Session 4b: <i>Presentation of Findings to Date</i></b>  <b><i>Long-Term Case Studies of Work Integrated Social Enterprises in British Columbia</i></b> Shawn de Raaf, SRDC-BC & Rupert Downing <b><i>Evaluating the Effectiveness of WISE in the Mental Health Sector</i></b> Rosemary Lysaght & Agnieszka Fecica, Queen's <b><i>Field Trials and Evaluation of Three WISE Programs in Northern Simcoe County Ontario</i></b> Shawn de Raaf, SRDC <b><i>Discussion – final 15 minutes</i></b>
15:20 – 15:30	<b>Conclusion for the Workshop</b>  François Brouard, Carleton University Patrick Bussière, Director, Social Research, ESDC