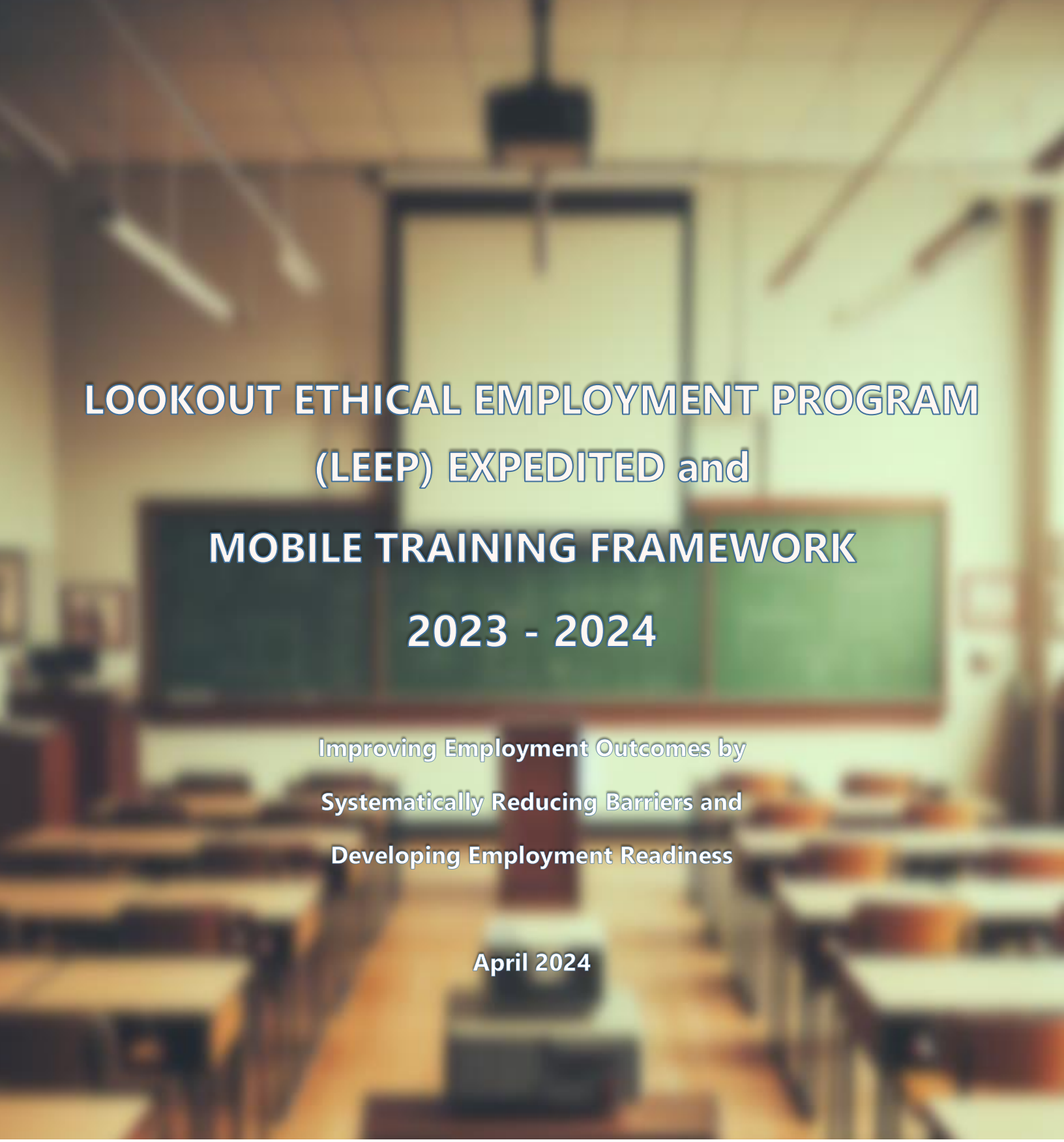


LOOKOUT ETHICAL EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM (LEEP) EXPEDITED and MOBILE TRAINING FRAMEWORK 2023 - 2024

Improving Employment Outcomes by
Systematically Reducing Barriers and
Developing Employment Readiness

April 2024

Lookout Housing+Health Society

Lookout foundation

Canada

British Columbia

This program is funded by the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia.

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and the Province of British Columbia.





































EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Lookout Ethical Employment Program (LEEP) Expedited Program and Mobile Training Framework, operated by Lookout Housing and Health Society, embodies a proactive and innovative approach to tackling the countless barriers to employment experienced by individuals in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES), and surrounding downtown area. The program addresses homelessness and unemployment in two ways; it allows potential employees to engage in a 6-week curriculum during which they can also complete various basic certificate training commonly required to get employment. It provides immediate solutions to remedy the shortage of skills, training, and employment resources available. By providing updated resumes, work experiences and needed certifications, participants are far more likely to obtain opportunities for employment allowing them to move forward. With the added benefit of one-to-one support, participants are empowered to foster long-lasting transformations through employment stability, life skills and social inclusion.

This expedited program built off the original ideas of the 3-year LEEP Research Project operating since October 2020; however, it was condensed from its original 36-week curriculum to a faster-paced 6-week version. A separate portion of the program allowed for a Mobile Training Team to attend as requested on sites and provide Certificate Training. The goal was to identify individuals who may have fewer barriers to employment, and those for whom the longer 36-week program would be a barrier. Those in shelters, recovery homes, or similar short-term housing were not able to attend for the longer term. Identified needs included certificates such as First Aid and FOODSAFE, along with recent work experience to launch them into employment. This new strategy aimed to hone skills and provide valuable job training opportunities, self-determinacy and income for stable housing options.

The expedited extension of the original LEEP program:

- Adopts an “Employment-First” strategy.
- Provides valuable job training opportunities, promotes self-determination, helps participants build self-esteem, and provides income for stable housing options.
- Offers personalized, low-barrier support and training, including one-on-one guidance, mobile training, and continuous encouragement.
- Participants were drawn from a variety of allied organizations such as TWC Recovery Centre, Aboriginal Mother’s Centre, Lookout Shelters, Covenant House and others.

The mobile certificate training team:

- Delivers on-site training courses such as Mental Health First Aid, Occupational First Aid, and Non-Violent Crisis Intervention.
- Enhances participants’ employability and equips them with valuable skills to support themselves in their communities.

The expedited program:

- Has a targeted focus on individuals accessing services within the community.

- Has been meticulously crafted to fast-track the employability of residents who need immediate and targeted support against challenges like homelessness, addiction, mental health struggles, poverty, and limited access to educational resources.
- Offers immediate solutions to the shortage of skills, training, and employment resources while empowering participants through employment stability and social inclusion.
- Has attracted interest and requests from community partners due to its reputation and word-of-mouth promotion.

Recognizing the urgency in moving participants forward quickly when facing homelessness, addiction, and other challenges, we prioritize timely intervention to prevent prolonged exposure that could worsen their situations. This approach creates a comfortable environment for those who are experiencing difficulties with employment and may not be accessing traditional services. We tailor our services to ensure their success and comfort, engaging them effectively to support their journey towards stable employment. This inclusive approach allows us to address the multiple barriers participants face, offering customized support plans, accessible training, and active collaboration within the community and with allied organizations.

Central to the program's ethos is the principle of meeting participants "where they're at." both figuratively and literally; we ensure that our services are beneficial to their unique needs and circumstances. Identifying these diverse and often overlapping barriers participants face, from substance use and mental health challenges to a scarcity of skills and resources, the program adopts a low-barrier, highly personalized, and flexible service delivery model.

LEEP's ability to be nimble and responsive allows for tailored assistance and intervention necessary to meet the diverse needs of participants.

The program's success is underpinned by its adept navigation of the intricate web of challenges participants encounter:

- Employment Navigators and Job Developers work closely with participants to assist with support in all areas, often encompassing both social, psychosocial, economic, and emotional areas.
- Staff often assist simultaneously with housing, health, community, and support navigating these resources.
- LEEP assesses and works collaboratively to pinpoint suitable resources and job placement opportunities, as well as provide support for participants to navigate those often-challenging processes.
- LEEP Job Developers engage directly with employers and potential employers.
- LEEP will do whatever is necessary to ensure participants receive guidance to overcome employment barriers.
- Initiatives such as English tutoring and digital portfolio (tablets) support ongoing employability and empower participants to move forward in their journeys towards wellness.

A hallmark of the program lies in its holistic approach to support, extending beyond conventional job training programs. Recognizing that many participants are alone with few friends and family, LEEP addresses their broader social and economic needs. By facilitating access to services such as childcare and counselling, and

providing essential resources such as work attire, cell phones, tablets, personal makeovers, and transportation assistance, LEEP removes often unseen barriers for participants. Our team offers ongoing mentorship and counselling throughout the length of the program and beyond, creating a supportive family-type environment conducive to personal growth and empowerment.

The influence of the LEEP Expedited and Mobile Training Framework is tangible and evident. We provided 30 of the 69 participants with work experience placements and assisted eight of those individuals with securing gainful employment. Beyond facilitating meaningful employment opportunities for participants who encounter significant barriers in traditional job markets, the program fosters hope, boosts confidence, empowers individuals, and cultivates a sense of belonging and connection by encouraging mentorship. LEEP expanded upon a presence in the shelter system instead of focusing on tenants in Lookout's own housing portfolio as in the original LEEP iteration. In the shelters, LEEP identified a significant challenge faced by newcomers to Canada, many of whom were refugees. Many highly skilled workers were unable to move forward and were living in shelters with very little hope or support. LEEP recognized that these individuals possessed advanced skills and demonstrated swift employability. Our shelter presence allowed us to identify these new challenges. The team quickly pivoted and created tools for assisting with accessing proper work immigration documentation, finding pathways to secure ESL classes, and providing hope where there was none.

Noteworthy achievements include:

- Successful integration of refugees into the workforce.
- Provision of childcare support to enable participant attendance.
- Supplying digital portfolios in the form of tablets and Chromebooks, resources that participants were not able to acquire independently.
- With the aid of these tools and LEEP's support, participants were more easily able to perform job searches, connect with potential employers, and access learning resources.
- The ability to provide work experience placements enabled LEEP to create recent work experience for participants and often allowed the team time to strengthen and develop participants' skills and abilities in a safe environment.
- By highlighting participants' success, it becomes evident that they have the capacity within themselves to make positive impacts in their own lives.
- The program's emphasis on community collaboration and partnership ensures its reach extends beyond individual participants, nurturing a culture of inclusivity and support within the broader community.

Looking forward, the program remains unwavering in its commitment to providing accessible and effective pathways to employment for BC residents. Through a continued emphasis on innovation, collaboration, agility, and adaptability to the evolving needs of the community, the LEEP Expedited and Mobile Training Framework aspires to make a lasting and transformative impact on the lives of marginalized individuals in the DTES and

surrounding area, fostering greater stability, empowerment, and resilience in the face of adversity. Ultimately, it strives to create a brighter future for people and communities alike.

ABOUT LOOKOUT HOUSING AND HEALTH SOCIETY

Lookout Housing and Health Society is dedicated to addressing homelessness and associated challenges by empowering individuals to help themselves. As a social safety net, Lookout provides a range of services that promote improved well-being, all delivered with care, respect, and flexibility while remaining dedicated to reducing harm, navigating complex challenges, and advocating for minimal barrier support. As the landscape changes, the approach needs to be malleable. The Housing First model approach recognizes housing as a fundamental right and precondition for recovery. Identifying the growing need due to the impacts of the opioid crisis and acute requirements of people with mental health concerns, Lookout implements the Health First model providing a comprehensive range of services, including physical and mental health care, addiction counselling, harm reduction strategies, and preventative measures. Realizing that employment promotes independence, builds self-confidence and enhances the overall quality of life for all individuals, Lookout utilizes the Employment First model as well, tailoring their application to individual cases as needed, through their Lookout Ethical Employment Program (LEEP).

Lookout's vision is to transform lives through innovative and responsive services that build collaborative relationships and foster growth, striving to provide hope where it has been lost and working with their guests to reach their goals by developing innovative programs. Lookout identifies the service gaps in the community and collaborates with community partners to design and implement solutions. Their advocacy efforts aim to inform social policy, raise community awareness, and improve support services. The organization's values include compassion, engagement, inclusion, accountability, empowerment, versatility, a culture of self-evaluation, integrity, safety, and truth and reconciliation. Their principles are to be client-centred and nonjudgmental, treat all individuals with dignity, honesty, and integrity, lead with care, candour, and empathy, be trauma-informed, reduce harm, advance healing and growth, and offer opportunities for knowledge and connection.

Lookout officially merged with Keys: Housing and Health Solutions in 2014, which expanded Lookout both regionally and creatively. As a result, we extended our expertise and passion to serve more individuals with a diverse range of services within more communities. We initially began with serving 5 communities and as of 2019, we serve 19 communities. They include Vancouver, Victoria, Surrey, New Westminster, West Vancouver, North Vancouver (City and District), Burnaby, Langley, Abbotsford, Chilliwack, Mission and Maple Ridge. Including emergency and extreme weather shelters, Lookout houses more than 1,400 people each night.

In 2016, Lookout formally changed its name to Lookout Housing and Health Society and merged with the Mood Disorders Association of British Columbia (MDABC), combining two dynamic organizations to broaden the spectrum of support offered. We could now offer clinical mental health services and wellness programs to broaden the scope of services offered to the individuals we serve.

Lookout's multiple services include: 18 outreach teams, 2 community resource centres, a medical and dental clinic, a food bank, needle distribution and community cleanup, HIV and Hep C supports, 3 social enterprises, numerous peer and employment programs, and youth counselling programs. These services collectively serve more than 2,500 people daily.

Our Commitment

We believe helping people help themselves is essential in addressing homelessness and its many related issues. Securing appropriate housing is the first step in helping individuals attain self-sufficiency.

Our Mission, Mandate & Vision



Mission

We are a social safety net providing a range of housing, health, and support services that promote improved wellbeing for those in need.



Mandate

We respectfully provide caring, nonjudgmental, non-sectarian, flexible services. We strive to reduce harm and navigate complex challenges with advocacy and minimal barrier supports.



Vision

To transform lives through innovation, by providing responsive services that build collaborative relationships and foster growth through change. We endeavor to provide hope where hope has been lost.

Lookout Housing and Health Society is dedicated to:

Being a "social safety-net" for vulnerable adults.

Providing caring and respectful services that meet people "where they are at."

Providing safe, affordable housing with appropriate supports.

Keeping people in their home communities.

Working with guests to reach their goals by developing innovative programs.

Identifying service gaps in the community.

Collaborating with community partners to design
and implement solutions.

Advocacy that informs social policy, raises community awareness & improves support services.

Our Values

- Compassion
- Engagement
- Inclusion
- Accountability
- Empowerment
- Versatility
- Culture of self-evaluation
- Integrity
- Safety
- Truth and reconciliation

Our Principles

- Be client-centred and nonjudgmental.
- Ensure all are treated with dignity, honesty, and integrity.
- Lead with care, candor, and empathy.
- Be trauma-informed, reduce harm, and advance healing and growth.
- Offer opportunities for knowledge and connections.
- Cultivate individual responsibility.
- Demonstrate quality communication and teamwork.
- Model respect for all.
- Pursue flexibility, creativity, and an open mind.
- Engage and empower local communities to create change.

PROJECT BACKGROUND & DESCRIPTION

For residents of the Downtown Eastside (DTES) and the surrounding downtown area, life is marked by a multitude of challenges. These include a lack of secure employment opportunities, mental health and substance use struggles, poverty, homelessness, past traumas, and limited skillsets. Traditional job training programs have not been sufficient for this unique group of people, as they tend to use a generalized approach and can have many barriers. The LEEP Expedited and Mobile Training Framework is low barrier, and provides customized, one-on-one support and training, mobile on-site training, as well as ongoing encouragement and reassurance, personally tailored to suit each participants' specific needs. We understand that everyone is at a different starting point, so we must meet them where they're at, both literally and figuratively. Our mobile team comes to them, providing on-site training and one-on-one coaching to help people gain the life and employment skills employers seek.

The LEEP Expedited and Mobile Training Framework offers a comprehensive suite of services designed to enhance each participant's personal and professional journey. These include, but are not limited to, skill development programs, soft skills curriculum workshops, mobile training, career planning assessments, work experience placements, personalized job search assistance, clinical counselling, employment guidance, expertly crafted resume and cover letter support, interview preparation and training, as well as provisions for work attire and interview clothing.

The project caters to diverse participants with varying needs and aspirations, including but not limited to:

- Individuals eager to enter the workforce but requiring additional preparation.
- Those who may benefit from incremental encouragement to stay committed to the program.
- Individuals seeking to supplement limited income through part-time employment opportunities.
- Passionate individuals interested in roles involving peer mentorship and support.
- Persons who have experienced homelessness and face unique obstacles in their career paths.

The LEEP Expedited and Mobile Training Framework builds on the lessons learned from the first LEEP program condensing the original format into an expedited framework of 6 weeks. Both programs have employment navigators and job developers working closely with participants to first provide them with the necessary tools to allow them to reach their employment goals. This is carefully orchestrated in a collaborative partnership between the participant, their current supports, and various members of the LEEP team. Starting with first contact, a realistic goal is identified and built upon. As participants move through the program, they experience success as goals are met and new ones created. This positive journey aids in rebuilding their self-confidence and self-esteem.

Each participant is assigned a personal Employment Navigator and a back-up, so the team is meticulously prepared for success from commencement. Navigators provide detailed and comprehensive feedback to the Job Developer, who is a part of the picture early in the participant's journey. This allows participants a level of comfort regarding their job search. Participants' successes are public and celebrated long after they obtain

work, as Alumni are always invited to celebrations, graduations and social events. With the addition of Job Developers during this iteration of the project, the focus on post-employment support has enabled much more additional post-work support. Once employed, continued support is offered through follow-ups with the participants and their employers, mediation between the two parties and additional coaching if necessary.

LEEP collaborates with staff from diverse organizations, including shelters, youth centres, and recovery programs, informing them about the program's advantages and specifics. Additionally, LEEP conducts information sessions to identify individuals who could benefit from an expedited program. The goal is to assist participants by providing mobile training and full support, not only to find jobs but also to connect them with resources to remove barriers to employment. The support needed is extremely diverse and individually tailored, driven by the participant who is empowered to make informed decisions. We have assisted people with permanent resident applications, work visas, English classes, housing searches, job seeking, work experience placements, and more. LEEP celebrates their achievements, job interviews, and stable employment, and provides ongoing support.

The primary responsibility of an Employment Navigator (EN) is to equip participants for long-term employment success by delivering employable skill workshops. LEEP utilizes ABC Life Literacy Canada's UP Skills for Work Curriculum, which encompasses the recognized soft skills training needed for employability. The fundamental principle guiding LEEP's approach is meeting participants where they are at. Given the diverse demographic LEEP serves, it is crucial to adapt interactions accordingly. Employing a Trauma-Informed approach has been pivotal in effectively engaging with participants, allowing them to meet participants at their current level of readiness. Additionally, ENs empower participants to define their own employment goals while providing unwavering support throughout their journey. Oftentimes, participants may not fully grasp the breadth of available services or solutions to their challenges, necessitating proactive recommendations from ENs, a process integral to the entirety of the program. Fostering rapport with participants is paramount; building this rapport stands as a cornerstone skill for both ENs and Job Developers (JD) alike.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Overall Program Goal

To swiftly broaden the training and skill-building for residents in the Downtown Eastside and surrounding downtown area, helping them secure fair-wage jobs and improve their quality of life.

Specific Objectives:

- **Acceleration of Skill Enhancement**: Condense the traditional 36-week skill enhancement and training course into a 6-week time frame.
- **Broadening Reach**: Extend the focus from only Lookout-affiliated sites to include not only shelters, and tenancy buildings, but supportive housing facilities not affiliated with Lookout in DTES and surrounding downtown area as well.
- **Identification and Engagement**: Collaborate with shelter staff in DTES and surrounding area to identify potential participants who are new to the system and possess fewer pre-employment barriers.
- **Customized Support**: Provide one-on-one pre-employment assessments and tailored soft-skill curriculum training for each participant.
- **Certification and Work Experience**: Offer in-demand certification courses and real-world work experience with ethical practices and fair wages.
- **Community Partnership**: As the program matures, collaborate with community partners to extend services to their clientele.
- **Continuous Improvement**: Periodically review and adjust the program based on the effectiveness, participant, partner, and funder feedback, and changes in employment market demands.
- **Celebration and Recognition**: Acknowledge and celebrate milestones and successes achieved by participants to maintain high levels of morale and motivation.
- **Digital Portfolio**: Work with participants to set up email accounts, create digital portfolios containing their certifications, and provide them with a tablet and cell phone to facilitate job searches, applications, and interviews.
- **Employment Support:** Support both Employers and Employees to provide job solutions and HR support for LEEP Participants.

OVERVIEW OF OUTCOMES

The LEEP Expedited and Mobile Training Framework goal was to reach 5-8 participants per cohort and provide mobile training in the Downtown Eastside (DTES) and surrounding area of Vancouver. With its extension through March 29th, 2024, the project not only met but exceeded expectations by reaching 69 participants, and consisted of 8 6-week long cohorts, both within Lookout shelters as well as through community partnerships. These community partners included a mothers' centre, youth shelter, and recovery program centre, with both soft skills curriculum and mobile certificate training offered at each cohort location. The participants across the 8 cohorts were a diverse group. They spanned various age groups, from teens to older adults. Their ethnic backgrounds were varied, and they included all genders. Among them were individuals with substance use and mental health issues, as well as parents. Additionally, some participants had English as a second language, as these refugees or newcomers to Canada came from varying socio-economic backgrounds and educational levels. The Employment Navigators exchanged roles in teaching the curriculum and attending mobile training with participants for support with each new cohort. As with the original LEEP project, the LEEP Expedited and Mobile Training Framework curriculum utilized ABC Life Literacy Canada's UP Skills for Work, and included the following curriculum classes:

- Adaptability
- Accountability
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Confidence
- Creativity & Innovation
- Motivation
- Problem Solving
- Stress Management
- Time Management

The curriculum was done in small groups and, when required, as one-on-one sessions. Of the 69 participants, 44 graduated, 30 completed work experience, 6 of whom had gained employment outside of Lookout, and another 2 within Lookout. 5 are enrolled in English tutoring to build up their language skills. Gift cards were provided as incentives to participants for attending mobile training, as well as for completing Workplace Essential Skill Assessment (WESA) intakes, an online employee performance evaluation tool designed to objectively evaluate an individual's capabilities and predict their on-the-job performance. Digital tablets were given to participants as a way for them to access the electronic portfolios, created together with the Employment Navigators.

Statistical Summary

Cohort Number	Date	Total Number of Participants	Number of Cohort Graduates	Number of Participants that received Work Experience Placements	Number of Participants Employed by Lookout	Number of Participants Employed Outside of Lookout	Number of Participants on Income Assistance/ PWD
1 Vancouver DTES	**Mar 1, 2023 – Apr 12, 2023**	6	5	2	0	1	5
2 Vancouver	**Apr 13, 2023 – May 25, 2023**	10	5	2	0	0	8
3 Vancouver	**May 26, 2023 – Jul 19, 2023**	10	5	2	1	0	6
4 Vancouver DTES	**Jul 20, 2023 – Sep 1, 2023**	5	0	0	0	0	3
5 Vancouver	**Sep 5, 2023 – Oct 13, 2023**	10	8	5	1	1	5
6 Vancouver DTES	**Oct 16, 2023 – Nov 27, 2023**	8	3	3	0	0	4
7 Vancouver	**Nov 28, 2023 – Jan 31, 2024**	10	8	6	0	2	4
8 Vancouver DTES	**Feb 1, 2024 – Mar 29, 2024**	10	10	10	0	2	4
Totals		**69**	**44**	**30**	**2**	**6**	**39**

Mobile Training:

First Aid

FOODSAFE

Non-Violent Crisis Intervention (NVCI)

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)

Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS)

Resume Building

Respectful Workplace

	Total Unique Participants Per Program Cohorts 1 – 8, March 1, 2023 -March 29, 2024			
Training	**LEEP Expedited**	**LEEP - Vancouver Region (excluding Expansion)**	**LEEP - Surrey Region**	**Total per training**
First Aid	88	22	8	118
FOODSAFE	50	9	5	64
NVCI	21	2	2	25
MHFA	44	15	15	74
WHMIS	16	9	7	32
Resume Building	39	12	10	61
Respectful Workplace	3			3
Total per program	261	69	47	377

First Cohort Statistics (March 1, 2023 – April 12, 2023)

Yukon Shelter and Housing Centre – Vancouver DTES

Total Number of Participants	Number of Cohort Graduates	Number of Participants that received Work Experience Placements	Number of Participants Employed by Lookout	Number of Participants Employed Outside of Lookout
6	5	2	0	1

Work experience: Receptionist at the Mood Disorder Association of BC – 2 placements

Employment: Sales representative at Eco Paving

Curriculum Training and Attendance:

Adaptability	6/6
Accountability	6/6
Collaboration/Teamwork	6/6
Communication	6/6
Confidence	6/6
Creativity & Innovation	6/6
Motivation	6/6
Problem Solving	6/6
Stress Management	6/6
Time Management	6/6

Number of Gift Cards provided:

$15 Value	$25 Value
17	7

Total Number of Transit Tickets Provided: 81

Second Cohort Statistics (April 13, 2023 – May 25, 2023)

Aboriginal Mother Centre Society - Vancouver

Total Number of Participants	Number of Cohort Graduates	Number of Participants that received Work Experience Placements	Number of Participants Employed by Lookout	Number of Participants Employed Outside of Lookout
10	5	2	0	0

Work experience: Prep cook/Line cook at Baird Blackstone & Homemaker at Al Mitchell Place

Curriculum Training and Attendance:

Adaptability	6/10
Accountability	7/10
Collaboration/Teamwork	6/10
Communication	7/10
Confidence	7/10
Creativity & Innovation	7/10
Motivation	7/10
Problem Solving	6/10
Stress Management	7/10
Time Management	7/10

Number of Gift Cards provided:

$15 Value	$25 Value
0	11

Total Number of Transit Tickets Provided: 6

Third Cohort Statistics (May 26, 2023 – July 19, 2023)

Together We Can - Vancouver

Total Number of Participants	Number of Cohort Graduates	Number of Participants that received Work Experience Placements	Number of Participants Employed by Lookout	Number of Participants Employed Outside of Lookout
10	5	2	1	0

Work experience: Maintenance at North Shore Shelter
Peer Support Worker at Together We Can and Lookout Housing

Employment: Peer Navigator for LEEP Expedited and Mobile Training Framework

Curriculum Training and Attendance:

Adaptability	5/10
Accountability	5/10
Collaboration/Teamwork	5/10
Communication	5/10
Confidence	8/10
Creativity & Innovation	5/10
Motivation	9/10
Problem Solving	5/10
Stress Management	8/10
Time Management	5/10

Number of Gift Cards provided:

$15 Value	$25 Value
8	31

Total Number of Transit Tickets Provided: 16

Fourth Cohort Statistics (July 20, 2023 – September 1, 2023)

Jim Green Residence – Vancouver DTES

Total Number of Participants	Number of Cohort Graduates	Number of Participants that received Work Experience Placements	Number of Participants Employed by Lookout	Number of Participants Employed Outside of Lookout
5	0	0	0	0

Curriculum Training and Attendance:

Adaptability	3/5
Accountability	4/5
Collaboration/Teamwork	3/5
Communication	3/5
Confidence	3/5
Creativity & Innovation	1/5
Motivation	4/5
Problem Solving	4/5
Stress Management	3/5
Time Management	4/5

Number of Gift Cards provided:

$15 Value	$25 Value
11	6

Total Number of Transit Tickets Provided: 0

Fifth Cohort Statistics (September 5, 2023 – October 13, 2023)

Covenant House – Vancouver

Total Number of Participants	Number of Cohort Graduates	Number of Participants that received Work Experience Placements	Number of Participants Employed by Lookout	Number of Participants Employed Outside of Lookout
10	8	5	1	1

Work experience: Giftwrapping at Lookout Housing – 2 placements
Maintenance at Commercial - Hastings shelter
Prep cook/Line cook and Peer Support work at Yukon Shelter
Receptionist at the Mood Disorder Association of BC

Employment: Skilled Labour at Northwest Sheet Metal
Shelter Resource Worker at Lookout Housing

Curriculum Training and Attendance:

Adaptability	5/10
Accountability	7/10
Collaboration/Teamwork	5/10
Communication	8/10
Confidence	8/10
Creativity & Innovation	5/10
Motivation	4/10
Problem Solving	9/10
Stress Management	5/10
Time Management	6/10

Number of Gift Cards provided:

$15 Value	$25 Value
13	8

Total Number of Transit Tickets Provided: 30

Sixth Cohort Statistics (October 16, 2023 – November 27, 2023)

Aboriginal Front Door Society – Vancouver DTES

Total Number of Participants	Number of Cohort Graduates	Number of Participants that received Work Experience Placements	Number of Participants Employed by Lookout	Number of Participants Employed Outside of Lookout
8	3	3	0	0

Work experience: Peer Support Worker at Aboriginal Front Door Society – 3 placements

Curriculum Training and Attendance:

Adaptability	5/8
Accountability	5/8
Collaboration/Teamwork	5/8
Communication	5/8
Confidence	5/8
Creativity & Innovation	5/8
Motivation	5/8
Problem Solving	5/8
Stress Management	5/8
Time Management	5/8

Number of Gift Cards provided:

$15 Value	$25 Value
7	1

Total Number of Transit Tickets Provided: 0

Seventh Cohort Statistics (November 28, 2023 – January 31, 2024)

The Gathering Place - Vancouver

Total Number of Participants	Number of Cohort Graduates	Number of Participants that received Work Experience Placements	Number of Participants Employed by Lookout	Number of Participants Employed Outside of Lookout
10	8	6	0	2

Work experience: Maintenance at Commercial - Hastings shelter – 2 placements
Prep cook/Line Cook at Yukon Shelter – 2 placements
Shelter worker at Marpole shelter
Skilled Labour at M Woodward Contracting

Employment: Skilled Labour at M Woodward Contracting
Care aid for private in-home care

Curriculum Training and Attendance:

Adaptability	7/10
Accountability	7/10
Collaboration/Teamwork	8/10
Communication	7/10
Confidence	10/10
Creativity & Innovation	8/10
Motivation	10/10
Problem Solving	8/10
Stress Management	8/10
Time Management	9/10

Number of Gift Cards provided:

$15 Value	$25 Value
n/a	9

Total Number of Transit Tickets Provided 44

Eighth Cohort Statistics (February 1, 2024 – March 29, 2024)

Evelyne Saller Centre – Vancouver DTES

Total Number of Participants	Number of Cohort Graduates	Number of Participants that received Work Experience Placements	Number of Participants Employed by Lookout	Number of Participants Employed Outside of Lookout
10	10	10	0	2

Work experience: Peer Support worker at Commercial-Hastings Shelter – 2 placements
Peer Support worker at Imperial Shelter – 2 placements
Peer Support worker at Marpole Shelter
Peer Support worker at Kiwassa Shelter
Peer Support worker at Atira Women's Society – 2 placements
Maintenance worker at Sakura So – 2 placements

Employment: Care aid for private in-home care
Landscaper at Holland Landscaping

Curriculum Training and Attendance:

Adaptability	10/10
Accountability	10/10
Collaboration/Teamwork	10/10
Communication	10/10
Confidence	10/10
Creativity & Innovation	10/10
Motivation	10/10
Problem Solving	10/10
Stress Management	10/10
Time Management	10/10

Number of Gift Cards provided:

$15 Value	$25 Value
0	10

Total Number of Transit Tickets Provided 14

SUCCESSES

With Lookout's Ethical Employment Program, our journey has been defined by remarkable successes and transformative impact. Using these unique insights and experiences, we have implemented innovative strategies that have navigated diverse challenges with resilience and effectiveness. Our program's commitment has led to outstanding outcomes, shaping the lives of participants and fostering a culture of inclusivity and support within our community.

System navigation for newcomers to Canada:

One of our participants from Cohort 1 had some issues with their refugee status application. This person was trained in the certificate suite and curriculum and once the application was approved, the participant immediately jumped into the workforce.

Integrated English as a Second Language into the curriculum:

Some participants faced difficulties accessing ESL classes due to pending refugee applications, which restricted their eligibility for LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada). Through innovative research, LEEP staff identified avenues for participants to apply for hardship assistance through Income Assistance, enabling them to enroll in WorkBC ESL classes. Another option was the ability to source educational funding for the hiring of ESL tutors. In the recent months of the program, LEEP was able to design and implement its own one-on-one English language classes addressing this emerging need.

Provision of Childcare:

Without funding for childcare, participants at the Aboriginal Mother Centre Society would have been unable to attend training sessions.

Digital Empowerment for Graduating Participants:

This allowed many to be able to access their digital portfolios to edit resumes, job search, and use email for correspondence during their participation in LEEP. This helped to facilitate the job search, and video conferencing enhanced the hiring process for the participants who were unable to access computer resources due to their circumstances, leading to employment.

Boosting Connectivity for Communication Resources:

The ability to allocate funds for the purchasing of communication supplies, such as phones and phone minutes facilitated connection with potential employers during the job search process. Participants were able to receive calls and easily schedule interviews during the job search process. An especially important step enabling potential employers to contact the applicants with ease (versus email). Employment navigators are also encouraged to purchase other work supplies required for specific employment.

Overcoming Financial Hurdles for Success:

By providing start-up funds for gainful employment, participants can focus exclusively on their job responsibilities without worrying about essential equipment like high-visibility workwear and steel-toed boots. These items, often financial barriers to employment, no longer pose obstacles, enabling individuals to fully engage in their work

Exceeding Program Goals:

The program not only met but exceeded its goal of reaching 5-8 participants per cohort. With a total of 69 participants across 8 cohorts, the program demonstrated its effectiveness in engaging individuals from diverse backgrounds and addressing their employment needs.

Inclusive Employment through Community Collaboration:

The program's focus on community collaboration and partnership not only expanded its influence beyond individual participants but also fostered a culture of inclusivity and support within the business community. This collaborative strategy strengthens sustainability and long-term impact, promoting employment inclusivity.

Exploring Careers with Funding for Work Placements:

This initiative facilitates individuals in exploring various career paths by providing funding for hands-on experiences in their field of interest. Participants are offered the opportunity to "test drive" different roles, supported by mentors and resources tailored to their needs. Through careful evaluation, each participant's suitability for the program is assessed, ensuring that they gain valuable insights into their chosen field while also identifying the best fit for their skills and aspirations.

Alumni Empowerment in LEEP:

The involvement of program graduates as LEEP Peer Navigators enhanced the program experience for all cohorts. By witnessing the success of these alumni firsthand, participants gained a deeper understanding of the benefits of participating in the LEEP program. Using their familiarity with LEEP, these alumni enriched the training curriculum and utilized their personal “lived experiences” to better connect with and facilitate the growth of individuals within the cohorts.

Supportive Workplace Culture:

Within LEEP and in Lookout itself, the workplace culture thrived on inclusivity and cooperation, providing a nurturing atmosphere for all staff members. Embracing diversity, individuals from varying backgrounds were warmly welcomed and treated with equality. This inclusive philosophy not only fostered a sense of belonging but also facilitated effective collaboration among staff and Peer Navigators. Encouraged by this supportive environment, everyone involved in the program could carry out their duties with a shared commitment to assisting those we serve.

CHALLENGES

Reflecting on the experiences of both an Employment Navigator (EN) and Job Developer (JD), several key insights emerged.

One notable challenge faced by Employment Navigators (EN) arises when participants experience bouts of demotivation, hindering their engagement with workshops. In such instances, weekly or even more frequent wellness checks are conducted to reaffirm ongoing support and readiness to assist them for whenever they're prepared to continue their journey. With the expedited curriculum, it is quite easy to become demotivated if absence occurs as participants quickly feel disengaged with the rest of their classmates. This is due to the class progressing further along in their curriculums and participants feeling the pressure to "catch up". In such instances, we found switching to one-on-one workshops was preferable and allowed them to learn in a comfortable setting.

Other challenges encountered were the large numbers of newcomers to Canada in shelters. The team was challenged by the need to find unique solutions for their immigration concerns particularly those with refugee status. The participants may be highly qualified as physicians, electricians, etc., however, these certifications are not recognized in Canada. To further complicate the issue their status is often left in a "pending" status as they wait for approval towards getting Permanent Residency or work permits. They may have to wait several months or longer to be able to work legally. In the meantime, with the lack of a sustainable housing plan, they languish in shelters, often with language barriers and quickly lose hope. Recent initiatives such as ESL support and classes, as well as significant assistance with immigration documents, have proven successful for many, yet there is much more needed with this group.

During the early iteration of LEEP, the Team had 1 Job Developer. As cohorts from the expedited curriculum graduated, the students were able to begin their job searches, and many found employment before their work experience placements could be identified. It was recognized quickly that more Job Developers were needed to properly assist with both pre- and post-employment support. Once the additional Job Developers were in place at the tail end of the project, we have been able to provide the needed support on both ends.

Job Developers (JD) operate under a trauma-informed approach, albeit with distinct responsibilities. At the core of these duties is facilitating participants' job search endeavors, encompassing activities such as applying to postings, conducting mock interviews, and refining resumes. Moreover, JDs play a pivotal role in cultivating relationships with local businesses willing to hire participants, particularly through initiatives promoting diversity in hiring practices. JDs also provide much needed support post-employment, frequently bridging the gap between the Employers with their employees.

One of the most formidable challenges encountered as a JD is securing that crucial initial meeting with prospective employers. Leveraging personal connections has emerged as a best practice in navigating this obstacle, whether through friends, family, or acquaintances.

Both ENs and JDs play indispensable roles in guiding participants toward meaningful employment opportunities. By embracing a trauma-informed approach, adapting to individual needs, and fostering robust relationships, they continue to empower participants on their journey to long-term success in the workforce.

Participant Retention:

Maintaining consistent engagement and retention of participants throughout the program may be challenging due to various factors such as competing priorities, transient lifestyles, and personal circumstances. Strategies to address this challenge include providing ongoing support, addressing barriers to participation, and offering further incentives for continued engagement.

Accessibility Barriers:

Potential referrals may face barriers to participation in LEEP. These factors could be transportation issues, lack of awareness about the program services, language comprehension (ESL), and distrust of service providers due to previous participation in similar programs.

Resource Constraints:

Limited funding/resources, lack of infrastructure, and staff capacity constraints can be challenging to navigate for program delivery. Having to balance the demands of services with what is available.

Spatial Constraints:

LEEP has been unable to conduct curriculum classes or mobile certification training with interested organizations due to the lack of available space in their facilities.

Stigma and Discrimination:

Participants may face discrimination based on factors like substance use, MH, being homeless, and criminal history. Not only by the community but also by potential employers or their current staff. We can add to this the inequalities the participants may also face by race, gender, ethnicity, and other identities.

Complex Needs of Participants:

Potential participants may have complex needs extending beyond job training. These include mental health support, substance use treatment, housing assistance, and legal advocacy, along with assistance in navigating the immigration process.

Staff Attrition:

Outreach based work is uniquely stressful and not suited for everyone as it can be tough to work with the vulnerable community. We can also note the safety and security of some environments could also affect this. The increased uncertainty regarding permanent, long-term program funding can consequently lead employees to explore alternative avenues for job security.

Language and Cultural Barriers:

Participants from diverse ethnic backgrounds, including refugees and newcomers to Canada, may face language and cultural barriers that impact their ability to fully engage in the program. Providing culturally sensitive and language-appropriate support is essential but can be challenging.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As LEEP continues to make strides in empowering participants within the Downtown Eastside (DTES) and surrounding areas, it is crucial to recognize areas for growth and improvement to continue to meet community interests and needs. Some recommendations to further ensure success:

Expanded Outreach Efforts:

Increase efforts to reach marginalized populations within the DTES and surrounding downtown areas who may face additional barriers to participation, such as Indigenous communities, LGBTQ individuals, persons with disabilities, newcomers, and refugees to Canada. Collaborate with community organizations serving these populations to ensure inclusive outreach strategies.

Language Access:

Enhance language access by providing interpretation services and translated materials in languages commonly spoken by participants. This will ensure that language barriers do not hinder participation and engagement in the program.

Accessibility Measures:

Continue accessibility assessments of program facilities and activities to identify and address physical, sensory, and cognitive accessibility barriers. Implement measures such as accessible transportation options, and alternative formats for materials.

Gender-Inclusive Practices:

Staying informed about current gender-inclusive practices to create a welcoming and safe environment for all participants. This includes using inclusive language and offering support services tailored to the unique needs of transgender and non-binary individuals.

Peer Support Networks:

Expanding peer support networks and resources within the program to provide participants with opportunities for mutual support, sharing experiences, building connections, and giving back. Peer support can enhance feelings of belonging and reduce social isolation among participants. Expanding on alumni (program graduates) involvement to further enrich program experience for future cohorts.

Expanded Feedback Mechanisms:

Current feedback mechanisms solicit input from participants on their experiences with the program. Using expanded feedback specifically targeting those who have had experience with our participants. Whether it be allied organizations, inclusive employers partnered with LEEP, or even the staff that work in LEEP. This feedback can further identify improvement areas and adjust program delivery, content, and accessibility based on all involved, helping to maintain trust with the participants and balance the expectations of the employer.

Business Engagement Events:

Organize community engagement events and activities (outside of peer socials) to foster connections between program participants and more importantly the business community, to help with building a network of ethical employers. This can include job fairs, networking events, and community celebrations to highlight participants' achievements and promote social inclusion.

Long-Term Funding:

Uncertainty to longer-term funding sustainability to provide participants and staff with a sense of stability. Constant uncertainty can create emotional turbulence for everyone involved. Sustained funding enables continuity, allowing LEEP to maintain momentum and build upon successes with each passing day, week, and month.

6-WEEK VS 36-WEEK COMPARISON

The comparison between the 6-week expedited program and the 36-week original program is essential for understanding their respective strengths and limitations. By examining both approaches, participants and their respective workers can decide which program best suits their needs and goals. This comparison also allows for a deeper analysis of program effectiveness in achieving employment outcomes, thereby informing ongoing program development and improvement efforts.

Our direct involvement and interaction with program participants equip us to evaluate the operation and effectiveness of our programming. Through this assessment, we can shed light on the strengths, limitations, and overall impact of both programs. It is important to acknowledge that while each program has its own set of advantages and drawbacks, both were offered to our participants at no cost. Additionally, it is noteworthy that in addition to Lookout shelters, the expedited program was specifically tailored to deliver services to allied organizations in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

The 6-week expedited program, focusing on service delivery to external organizations, offers rapid essential skill training and building. This program runs in tandem with the Mobile Certificate training, offering courses such as First Aid, FOODSAFE, and Non-Violent Crisis Intervention among others, condensing the time needed for participants to enter the workforce by focusing on relevant employment skills. Enhancing health and wellness prospects for individuals in locations where shorter-term programs are the only available option. These encompass shelter spaces, treatment facilities, and youth centers. For those less deeply entrenched, the opportunity to regain stability becomes more attainable.

- Immigrants are provided a pathway to swiftly transition out of shelters where they may feel uncomfortable due to their unfamiliarity with individuals facing alcohol and drug issues.
- Enables individuals who are job-ready to acquire necessary certifications in their own settings rather than attending conventional training facilities where they may encounter stigma and judgment.
- Participants drawn from various allied organizations such as Together We Can Recovery Centre, Aboriginal Mother's Centre, Lookout Shelters, Covenant House and others.

The expedited nature of the program, compounded with potential challenges such as conflicting schedules and unstable housing (i.e. shelter accommodations) may lead to participants feeling overwhelmed by the pressure to quickly learn, practice, and apply these skills. For those individuals, the 36-week program would likely be a better option.

The 36-week program offers a comprehensive and supportive learning environment within the Lookout organization. This duration allows for in-depth exploration of subject matter, more personalized support, and opportunities for practice and skill development, fostering stronger team support as all employees working to ensure success in the program fall under the umbrella of Lookout. LEEP participants benefit from the more flexible curriculum, easily adapting to the individual's needs and learning level.

- People needing additional support are afforded the flexibility to enter, exit, and re-enter without setbacks, ensuring they maintain progress.

- Individuals deeply entrenched in addiction or grappling with mental health challenges often struggle to break free from their circumstances. The 36-week program provides ample time to cultivate the trusting relationships necessary for advancing individuals toward recovery and progress.
- Individuals grappling with addiction and mental health issues require tangible victories to propel them forward. Through consistent support and encouragement, their confidence is revitalized, leading to remarkable results.
- Former participants who had once lost all hope now experience a newfound sense of freedom and happiness, leading to revitalized relationships with family, friends, and a supportive community of like-minded individuals. They not only support each other but also become mentors to subsequent cohorts, fostering self-esteem and personal growth within the group.

It is important to recognize that the longer time commitment may not be favourable to some participants due to the uncertainty of their situations. With the potential to transition away from Lookout services for housing, or other personal reasons, this could hinder their learning and employment goals by limiting or even ending connections they have established. For those individuals, the 6-week program would likely be a better option.

Ultimately, the primary differences between the 6-week and 36-week programs are in their approach to learning intensity, duration, and support. The 6-week program benefits those seeking immediate job entry by offering a condensed and focused curriculum, reaching individuals before they become deeply entrenched in their circumstances. The 36-week program provides a more thorough and flexible learning experience, allowing for long-term skill development, a deeper understanding of the training, and enhanced support. This extra time allows participants a better opportunity to recover from employment barriers in a more supportive and predictable process and can be helpful for those who are pre-contemplative in their LEEP engagement or employment journeys.

CONCLUDING SUMMARY

The LEEP Expedited and Mobile Training Framework represents an innovative addition to the original LEEP initiative, designed to provide skill enhancement courses and mobile training in a condensed timeframe and offer services to participants residing in shelters outside of Lookout.

Drawing from the insights garnered from the original LEEP program, we adopted a flexible, non-linear approach to reduce barriers to employment by "meeting people where they're at" and delivering pre-employment and training services directly on-site. Our team, comprising of Employment Navigators, Job Developers, and residential staff, collaboratively developed individualized employment using Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound (S.M.A.R.T.) goals tailored to each participant's needs. Unlike the original LEEP project, which operated within a 36-week timeframe, The LEEP Expedited and Mobile Training Framework condensed its activities into 6 weeks, expediting the education and employment enhancement process.

Central to LEEP's approach is the recognition of the unique challenges participants face and the use of the asset-based approach that highlights their strength and resilience. Providing ongoing workshops, personalized support, and celebrating milestone achievements collectively, fosters a sense of community, independence, and motivation among the participants. We were able to provide work experience placements to 30 out of our 69 participants and help eight of these individuals in securing gainful employment. This holistic approach aims to boost self-esteem, enhance overall health outcomes, and alleviate feelings of isolation, allowing participants to regain their sense of legitimacy and reintegration into society. A strong emphasis is placed on teamwork, cultivating a collaborative environment that benefits both staff and participants. We firmly believe that both the original LEEP and the Expedited programs offer significant opportunities to participants. The added option of an expedited program provides a valuable resource for participants who require only a few mobile training certifications to meet their current employment needs or those who can benefit from an expedited training curriculum due to their circumstances. By remaining committed to innovation and flexibility, we aim to further enhance the impact of the LEEP projects in empowering participants on their journey towards sustainable employment and social reintegration

APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT SUCCESS STORIES

H.K.
Yukon Shelter and Housing Centre – Vancouver DTES

H.K. bravely made the decision to immigrate to Canada earlier last summer in July 2022 from Uganda to make a better life for herself and her family. Arriving here alone and leaving her family with the idea that life here would be better. Upon her arrival she found herself at one of our Lookout shelters, 'The Yukon'. Being from Uganda substance use is very limited and unseen. The culture shock was huge, having to transition not only her ideals of Canada but the community she is now living with. The amount of substance use H.K. was exposed to was overwhelming and a massive culture shock. Back home, H.K. was a successful sales representative and supervisor, having obtained her bachelor's in business administration at Makerere University Business School. Moving to Canada H.K. has started from ground zero; no job, no home, and a lack of in person support system. "Before I joined LEEP, I was afraid, felt lost, and didn't know how I could integrate into the community. The fact that I was new and had no friends to talk to and didn't know any people to get guidance on how to integrate." She realized that getting into a position to successfully support herself and her family would take a lot of hard work and determination.

"When the LEEP team contacted me, it was the start of my journey. The classes brought meaning and focus back into my life. It was at this moment I started to see the bright side of making the choice to move to Canada." Upon meeting H.K., she volunteered with the Salvation Army and Mount Pleasant Community Centre. She is hard-working and thrives when she's busy doing work. Being shy and timid at first, through completing the workshops and consistent one-on-one she has come out of her shell and has shown us a resilient and cheerful side of her. "The help and advice the team gave me has guided me and made me courageous that even without immigration status I felt loved without judgement." Work has always been her main priority as that meant an income to share with her family and to get her housing. Living in a shelter can be difficult for individuals who don't use and can be easy to fall into the system due to your surroundings. H.K. stayed strong throughout this time and managed to refrain from any substance use. "The situation I was in, being homeless, not having family around me, starting from scratch was hard. The LEEP team made me stronger, and I kept pushing."

H.K. has continuously put herself out there by attending job interviews and trying new jobs. Her first employment through LEEP was a work experience done with the Mood Disorder Association of BC as an admin assistant. During this time, H.K.'s passions remained in business and sales; being in Canada, she didn't think that dream was possible, and she considered switching careers to nursing. She secured a job as a PSW with an organization in Vancouver. When her work experience ended it was time to open up new opportunities in the work field. This has led to a position as a Sales Representative with ECO Paving. H.K. was astounded that she was able to have a career in the field she was passionate about. She resigned from her PSW position and wanted to put in all her effort into her new position. H.K. is a person who likes to keep busy and fills up her free time working as a cleaner.

H.K. continues to strive and excel with anything she puts her mind towards. We continue to work with H.K. to see how we can enhance her career in Sales and offer support with what she needs. She has since moved out of The Yukon shelter and secured housing at the Olive Sky Building. While her journey here has been bumpy H.K. has maintained a positive outlook on everything and has remained positive as these wins come across her path.

“I am still using their guidelines, love and all contributions they have made towards me. I will never be able to repay their kindness because they made me feel welcomed, loved and they believed in me.”

K.A.
Aboriginal Mother Centre Society - Vancouver

After being evicted from her residence two years ago, K.A. found herself unhoused while caring for her young granddaughter. They spent most days couch surfing with friends and family and other days finding themselves in shelters. However, K.A. didn't lose hope.

She was referred by a friend to the Aboriginal Mother Centre Society where she was able to secure temporary residency. Shortly after K.A. and her granddaughter moved in, her granddaughter went to live with family temporarily and has since returned to her care. This transition was difficult for K.A. because she was not used to communal living and felt a little bit lost. She was eager to get back into the workforce but did not know how to go about doing so.

In May of 2023, the LEEP Expedited program was offered at the Aboriginal Mother Centre Society where K.A. was fully onboard and excited to participate. She was most excited with pre-employment and training services along with one-on-one support to give her the confidence to thrive in the workforce. She enjoyed the group workshops because she felt respected for her ideas. She felt comfortable engaging with the group showing interest in the topics that were covered. K.A. was always in attendance for each workshop, showing her dedication to improving her life for her and her granddaughter.

Upon completion, K.A. felt proud of herself and excited to move forward with her employment goals. She felt like she had options for the first time in a long time, not like before when she felt stuck and unheard. The next step for K.A. was the one she had been working so hard to achieve, it was time to start her work experience.

As part of the LEEP Expedited program, K.A. began her work experience at the Lookout Food Hub. She appreciates how warm and friendly the staff was when she was being trained. "I really like working with Tracy" she says with a smile on her face. She goes on to say that she learned how the Hub was run quite quickly and now is confident in working by herself. She is now working towards completing her sixty hours of work experience.

"LEEP has given me the confidence to move forward in my life" she says. With this newfound confidence, K.A. is now able to focus on other goals such as finding permanent housing for her and her granddaughter. After receiving a letter of support from her Lookout Employment Navigator for a housing application, K.A. expresses her appreciation by saying, "I appreciate the continued support that you all have given me, thank you".

J.B.
Together We Can - Vancouver

J.B. grew up in the small town of Brockville, Ontario with a loving family and a good upbringing. His parents kept busy with the furniture store they owned, giving J.B. a lot of freedom growing up. J.B. had many parties because of this freedom when he resided with his parents and at the time, his parents did not mind. Around the end of high school, the parties began getting out of hand, and his parents started to put a stop to it.

After high school, J.B. moved to Whistler, B.C., and began a job that allowed him to work on the ski mountain. Although J.B. now had a job in Whistler and the ability to ski every day, he was partying quite often, leading to excessive alcohol use and "party drugs". J.B. was attending his shifts intoxicated as he was in a work environment where this was normalized, but after a while, J.B. lost this job due to sleeping in Merlin's Bar & Grill after hours. J.B. remembers losing this job as being the "first time I felt consequences for my actions because before that my parents were bailing out me of small troubles but that time, I didn't tell them because I was ashamed". After this, J.B. began couch surfing and selling drugs to get by financially. This lasted for about a year before he decided to move back to Ontario with the hopes of getting back on his feet. J.B. went to college when he returned to Ontario but did not enjoy the courses he was taking, so he left college after one semester and the partying, alcohol, and drug use continued very heavily.

During this time, J.B. met a girl and moved to Port Coquitlam, B.C. where he lived with his partner for about two years before moving to downtown Vancouver. J.B. did attend Douglas College at this time and received a diploma in Landscaping. At this time, J.B. had stopped his drug use but had continued to drink excessively and would "blackout" every time he was drinking. J.B. notes, "That cost me that relationship and that was the girl I was going to marry. She broke it off because of my drinking".

Due to the end of this relationship, J.B. moved down the street into a friend's home. While residing at this friend's home, J.B. describes it as, "a massive party all the time" while noting that this is what brought him back into his drug addiction. Despite the heavy drug and alcohol use, J.B. secured a job at Fossil doing landscaping, for a few years but ultimately, the alcohol and drug use resulted in him losing it. After the loss of his job, he and a friend decided to start up their own landscaping company, though after meeting a new partner and moving to Squamish, J.B.'s drinking began to get out of control again and he lost that relationship as well.

In 2017, J.B. moved back to Ontario, stating, "I thought it would fix my problems, but it made things worse". He started his own construction/landscaping company which he notes went well and lots of work was coming in until the COVID-19 pandemic hit. J.B. says, "I was miserable on the inside and super depressed but portrayed happiness. I had another failed relationship within this."

"Around January or February 2023, I was at the height of my addiction, spending tons of money on drugs, alcohol, and gambling. I lost another job and that was the final straw, so I isolated myself and finally talked to family and asked for help" J.B. says. He notes that his mother helped him get into a treatment facility, which led J.B. back to Vancouver to attend the Together We Can Treatment Facility (TWC). J.B. happily says, "It has changed my life, I'm back in the city I love and I'm sober".

Around June 2023, while J.B. was a resident at TWC, LEEP attended the facility for an information session. J.B. laughs noting, "They had a tent with snacks to lure us in and offering programs. I thought it would be helpful, so I signed up and I ended up signing up for the LEEP program itself". When debriefing about the LEEP program and J.B.'s time spent with the Navigators and Leadership, he says, "It helped me re-center and focus

on career opportunities. The courses were very helpful, and they directed me on the path of what I wanted to do. I got the opportunity to work within TWC which led me to a full-time position here and I assistant manage a house, and everything is great".

"I'm very grateful for the LEEP program and it has provided me with a lot of stepping stones."

M.E.
Covenant House – Vancouver

M.E. came to Canada last year with much passion as a refugee and newcomer. She came with no Canadian experience or education, which even through different kinds of support, proved difficult for her. She needed further guidance about the work field and environment in Canada.

She began her way by studying English and further pursued education by enrolling herself in a Dental Assistant program at a local college. Throughout this process, M.E. also applied for many jobs but, "could not find one that was a good fit". With help from her life skills worker, M.E. was introduced to the LEEP program.

M.E. was very intrigued about LEEP and was soon connected with Employment Navigators. "I joined LEEP in September and met the kindest people, Bonnie, Britney, Aku, and Patty". They ran creative and fun workshops that helped her build confidence, as well as helped her improve her communication skills.

Once M.E. graduated from the Foundational Skills curriculum, she met with the LEEP team's job development coordinator. M.E. then received an interview for Administration Assistant at the Mood Disorder Association of BC. She was very nervous as it was her first interview in Canada. LEEP Navigators supported her by completing a mock interview which helped to boost her confidence and feel more at ease with the process.

M.E. exceeded all expectations and got the work experience placement. She is very excited and thankful for all the support offered by the LEEP team, "It was an unbelievable moment as it will change my life. I will be having experience in a clinic, and this will make it way easier for me to find a job once I graduate from college. It is a life-changing process, and I am forever thankful. I never thought I would have the opportunity to accomplish this far with this much support".

M.J.
Covenant House – Vancouver

After arriving in Canada in May of 2023, M.J. found himself staying at the Salvation Army Shelter in the Downtown Eastside, marking a significant transition for him as a native of Afghanistan unfamiliar with witnessing marginalized communities. While awaiting the processing of his immigration application, he made efforts to keep himself occupied. By September of the same year, he transitioned to a supportive housing facility where he was introduced to the L.E.E.P. program.

Initially reserved and hesitant, M.J.'s personality gradually blossomed as he became more acquainted with the Navigators. He not only committed himself to the L.E.E.P. program but also actively sought out additional opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills. Attending every Foundational Skills workshop punctually, M.J. demonstrated a strong work ethic and improved communication skills as he grew more comfortable within the LEEP program. Additionally, he successfully completed all available mobile training courses offered by L.E.E.P.

Upon successfully finishing the program, M.J. experienced a surge of pride and anticipation when considering his employment opportunities. It was a refreshing departure from the sense of confinement and neglect he had felt previously. Now, he was empowered with a newfound sense of agency and options. The next leg of his journey involved pursuing the work experience he had long been yearning for.

As part of the L.E.E.P. Expansion program, M.J. embarked on his work experience at the Yukon Shelter, where he served as a prep cook. He was deeply appreciative of the warmth and friendliness exhibited by the staff during his training, remarking, "I really appreciate how friendly and kind everyone is to me." M.J.'s exemplary work ethic quickly became evident as he swiftly mastered his duties and fulfilled expectations in the kitchen. Recognizing his dedication, the L.E.E.P. and Yukon staff worked collaboratively to enhance his skill set with the end goal of employment within the service site.

Expressing profound gratitude for the opportunities afforded by L.E.E.P., M.J. expressed newfound optimism about his future. Although uncertain about his desired career path initially, he now feels a strong calling to give back to his community. "I want to work as a support worker, so I can help people the way you all helped me. Thank you for giving me a future," he shared.

At the time of this report, M.J. has been hired as a Casual Shelter Resource Worker within Lookout Housing and Health, marking a significant milestone in his journey toward stability and fulfillment.

C.N.
The Gathering Place – Vancouver

C.N. came to Canada back in October of 2023 in hopes of a future with many opportunities. Coming from her hometown in Uganda, C.N. is the mother of two boys and has a loving and caring family that helps support her through her journey in Canada. Upon landing in Canada, C.N. struggled to receive the guidance she needed to start her professional journey. This was until she was recruited by LEEP.

C.N. believes finding LEEP was "a match made in heaven". The day that the LEEP Expansion was completing referrals at The Gathering Place, she and her new friend J.K. decided to go check out the community centre in hopes of finding help. It was there that LEEP Employment Navigator Bonnie told them about the program that included workshops, certification courses, and opportunities for work experience placements. This is exactly what C.N. needed. C.N. states, "LEEP brought me hope". Both she and her friend eagerly completed a referral and then got accepted into LEEP.

C.N. excelled in all of the workshops, often offering to read and take the books home to study on her own. She was eager, engaged, and always thankful. Upon completing LEEP she received her FOODSAFE, First Aid, Mental Health First Aid, and WHMIS certificates. All of them she was elated to have the chance at completing.

Once she completed all of the available mobile training courses and workshops, she was then offered a 60-hour work experience at an EWR shelter, an opportunity she is extremely grateful for. C.N. was punctual, completed all of the needed job duties, and loved every minute of it. C.N. has a passion for caring for others and holds diplomas in both accounting and caregiving from her home country. She loved all of the staff, the guests, and most of all the chance to help others who need Lookout's services.

She successfully completed her work experience and had a resume completed with the LEEP team. C.N. recently found full-time employment as a support worker for an elderly woman in need of care. She has also found housing outside of the shelters and looks forward to further establishing herself here in Canada.

"I am thankful to LEEP for providing hope, guidance, and support through my journey in Canada. I look to hopefully work with Lookout one day in the future so that I can continue to help others like LEEP and Lookout do".

J.K.
The Gathering Place – Vancouver

Moving from his hometown in Kenya, J.K. immigrated to Canada in November 2023. In Kenya, J.K. has a family of 5 in which he is the 'breadwinner'. His goal when coming to Canada is to seek a better life for his family, to be able to find work, and send money back to Kenya to support them.

When J.K. first arrived in Vancouver, B.C. he stayed in the Catholic Men's shelter for 4 weeks before finding a more permanent residence near Commercial Broadway station. During J.K.'s first few months in Canada, he met others who also had recently immigrated from Kenya around the same time as he had. In meeting these new friends, they decided to get together to look for services to help guide them in Canada. In this search, they agreed to go into the Gathering Place to try and see if any services could assist them. At the time they were at Gathering Place, the LEEP Expansion team was doing an info session and recruiting new participants. Both J.K. and his friend were accepted into the program; J.K. was elated.

After joining LEEP, J.K. completed all Foundational Skills workshops and all mobile training offered to him, such as First Aid, FOODSAFE, WHMIS, Resume Building, etc. J.K. noted that he wanted to "grasp every opportunity given to him" and in that, J.K. successfully received all of his certificates for each course he took.

After completing workshops and mobile training, J.K. was accepted into a 60-hour work experience as a peer support and maintenance worker at Commercial Hastings Emergency Weather Response Shelter. J.K. successfully completed the work experience, stating that he "loved the environment, the people, and enjoyed his time with Lookout." J.K. is currently in the job development phase of the LEEP program, aiming to work anywhere including Lookout. J.K. is grateful for his experience and states that "LEEP was a great starting point for him."

"LEEP gave me the chance to experience first-hand how to include myself in this new culture in Canada. The work experience brought me in touch with many people from different places in Canada and it was an eye-opener for me. I'm very grateful for that opportunity and experience."

A.A.
The Gathering Place – Vancouver

A.A., a 23-year-old newcomer from Afghanistan, joined Lookout in January 2024 and successfully completed the LEEP Workshops. He fulfilled all the ESL requirements and became eligible for a work experience placement at a Construction and Carpentry Company.

Reflecting on his background, A.A. hails from a close-knit family environment where emotional bonds and shared values are deeply cherished. However, the war in Afghanistan forced him to leave his loved ones behind and migrate alone, driven by the pursuit of safety and a better future. Despite his longing for his homeland and family, he remains determined to forge a path of prosperity in his new home, aspiring to eventually reunite with his tribe in Canada. A.A. holds a bachelor of art degree in English and Literature from the University of Takhar, North Afghanistan, and he is eager to further his education within the Canadian system to broaden his contributions to society.

A.A. endured numerous perilous situations during his journey from Afghanistan to Canada, navigating through various South American countries. His resilience and determination saw him through these challenging times. Joining the Lookout Community and connecting with the LEEP Group marked a turning point for A.A., providing him with invaluable support and opportunities since arriving in Canada.

As A.A. nears the completion of his work experience with the Construction Company, he is poised to become one of Lookout Society's most esteemed members, embodying resilience, determination, and a commitment to building a brighter future.

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT LETTER OF ENDORSEMENT

11th Sep 2023

Re: LEEP Expansion Program

To Whom It May Concern:
I am pleased to provide this letter of support for Lookout Housing and Health Society (Lookout) to provide continued pre-employment and training program support services in the Vancouver region.

I was a program participant with Lookout's LEEP Expansion program in March (I don't remember the exact date), and the help and resources that the program provided me with helped me secure my first job in Canada. Being a refugee, the LEEP team helped me navigate around the skills and certification I needed to acquire for a job.

My one-on-one conversations with the team gave me courage and hope to keep fighting. Besides finding a job, I managed to get my own home. I went from living one year in a shelter to having two great jobs and a roof over my head, and all thanks to the program. This was a great experience, and up to now I still consult with the program for any guidance that I need to succeed and achieve my goals. If it were not for this program, I would still be miserable in the shelter. Thanks to the program I am what I am today, a fully empowered employed person. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Hellen Totti



APPENDIX C: PARTNERSHIP LETTERS OF ENDORSEMENT

Covenant House Vancouver

1302 Seymour Street
Vancouver, BC V6B 3P3
Tel: 604-638-GIFT (4438)
www.covenanthousebc.org

11 March 2024

To whom it may concern:

It is my pleasure to write a letter of support for the Lookout Housing and Health Society and their LEEP Program as they apply for funding.

Covenant House Vancouver (CHV) is dedicated to supporting young people experiencing homelessness to transition into the community by providing them with opportunities to gain employment skills and hands on experience; all based on their individual needs and circumstances. Fortunately, the LEEP program aligned very well with CHV's commitment to provide individualized services regardless of circumstances. Most recently at CHV, that meant serving young people who were new to Canada, had no/limited work experience, and/or for whom English is not their first language.

With a strong alignment of goals and values, and the programs flexibility to work with a large demographic of the population CHV serves, 7 young people graduated and were given hands on job experience. Job placements were unique and valuable opportunities, individually matched, for every participant to apply their newly acquired skills and knowledge. In addition, 3 young people supported with English courses to improve their proficiency, which will increase their ability to access and participate in the workforce. In addition, due to this language support, and pending future funding, these young people can now access and benefit from the full LEEP program.

This has been one of the most meaningful and successful partnerships CHV has made to date. Due to the high quality of the job placements and practical skills learned, the young people received tangible outcomes such as permanent employment, which in this market cannot be understated. CHV fully supports the continued funding for the LEEP program based on our current experiences and collaborations.

Regards,

Colin Rachel.

Colin Rachel,

Manager, Rights of Passage Program

Covenant House Vancouver

CITY OF VANCOUVER

February 29, 2024

re: Letter of Support – LookOut Housing & Health Society – LEEP

To whom it may concern,

Please consider this Letter of Support for the LookOut Housing and Health Society's Ethical Employment Program – LEEP. The LEEP workshops and training program offers participants opportunities for job development, skill enhancement, career planning, support, and a fun interactive environment of learning. These types of programs are vital to assisting our patrons who are often marginalized and face systemic barriers to accessing employment.

We recently had the privilege of hosting a cohort at The Gathering Place Community Centre with LookOut. We had an overwhelming level of interest especially from the recent growth in newcomers in our patron base. The LookOut Team was able to fill a cohort (plus a lengthy waitlist) from their first outreach visit. The Gathering Place offered in-kind space for their learning environment and, upon request, confidential meeting spaces to follow up with participants.

We greatly appreciate LookOut for supporting employment programs to serve our community and would be thrilled to host them again in the future.

Please reach out to me if you have any questions about the information.

Kind regards,

Josh Miller
Manager, Community Centre Operations
E: josh.miller@vancouver.ca
T: (604) 257-3870

APPENDIX D: EXTERNAL EMPLOYERS LETTERS OF ENDORSEMENT

Eco Paving Ltd.

101 – 2131 Hartley Avenue
Coquitlam, B.C. V3K 4X8
Phone: 604-813-7191
E-Mail: tanner@604greenteam.com

March 18, 2024

To whom it may concern:

My name is Tanner Nordin, the Director of Sales at Eco Paving. Eco Paving is a multi-level business ranging from office administration, sales to labour. In my position as Director of Sales, I was hiring strictly for sales positions. Eco Paving provides services for rubber paving, including driveways, pool decks, patios, playgrounds and more.

Sales Representatives at Eco Paving are required to attend weekly team meetings, team building activities and courses. This ensures that the entire team has a healthy work environment. In addition to that, the Sales Representatives were given a field placement in which they would do door-to-door sales, pitching the product and scheduling services.

Through working with the Lookout Ethical Employment Program (LEEP), I was able to hire participants of the program for sales positions. These positions included door-to-door sales, negotiation, team work and collaboration, and much more. Sales continues to have ongoing employment opportunities and I am grateful to have to opportunity to work with LEEP in meeting and hiring suitable and hard working employees.

I am happy to recommend LEEP to other business owners who may be seeking individuals for employment opportunities.

"In working with LEEP, I was able to give my criteria of requirements for employment and was able to set up interviews with qualified and potential candidates. I believe that LEEP provides an easier step in the screening process and opens up the idea to a different group in the community. A group that is not normally targeted, although still has the ability to succeed given the right opportunities."

Regards,

Tanner Nordin

Tanner Nordin

Director of Sales
Eco Paving

March 18, 2024

To whom it may concern,

As the proprietor of M Woodward Contracting, I am delighted to offer my endorsement for the LEEP program at Lookout Housing and Health Society. When Curtis Degenstein approached me regarding Lookout's diverse work environment, I was enthusiastic about providing individuals from vulnerable backgrounds an opportunity to enhance their lives. Drawing from my own lived experiences, I recognize the immense value of such opportunities.

I was thoroughly impressed by the candidates Lookout sent to me for work experience. In fact, I have already hired one individual full-time onto my team, and I plan to extend the offer to a second candidate once their work experience placement concludes.

I commend Lookout for their commitment to employment programs that benefit our community, and I would gladly collaborate with them again in the future.

Sincerely,

M Woodward

Michael Woodward

Owner, M Woodward Contracting

M Woodward Contracting, T: 778-325-3580, E: Mwoodwardcontracting@gmail.com

Everflow Drainage services Ltd

19673 71a ave. Langley BC V2Y 3A4
Phone:604-418-8382
Email: everflowdraiange@gmail.com

16 March 2024

To whom it may concern:

My name is Cheya Soultanian, the owner and operator of Ever Flow Drainage Solutions. We offer plumbing services to residential and commercial customers across the lower mainland in B.C. My company offers services in Perimeter Drain Tile Repair, Sewer Line Repairs & Replacement, as well as Plumbing Repairs and Services. These jobs are often labor intensive and require reliable and skilled workers. We offer our services 24/7 and provide emergency services any time we are needed. Offering such accessibility to my customers, I require dedicated and hard-working individuals.

With collaboration with the Lookout Ethical Employment Program, I was given the chance to give back to my community by employing graduates of the program. This made for a great business decision, as participants came to my company eager and ready to work. LEEP also provided them with the necessary certificates required for the job at hand, which proved greatly beneficial as the owner of a fast-growing drainage company.

I would recommend LEEP to any business owners looking for hard-working individuals that are eager to learn a new trade.

"I have not previously utilized a supported employment service. Collaborating with Job Developers from LEEP has proven advantageous in every aspect of the hiring process, in addition to providing ongoing support thereafter."

Regards,
Cheya Soultanian



Owner and Operator
Ever Flow Drainage Solutions

APPENDIX E: LOOKOUT LEADERSHIP LETTERS OF ENDORSEMENT

Lookout
Housing + Health Society

March 18 2024

To whom it may concern,

I am writing this reference letter in support of 6 LEEP participants that have completed or are currently completing work experience hours at 2 sites that I currently manage. I would like to recognize the LEEP program and facilitators, for their diligence in supporting every participant in their program. Participants have gained invaluable skills, and training that will help them succeed in their career endeavors moving forward.

All participants have been eager to learn, work very hard, and have contributed significantly to our day to day operations. Participants have helped with Peer support, setting up a new site, helping out with meal service, and preparing for guest intake, just to name a few duties. Every participant has shown compassion towards the population we serve, they have been diligent in completing tasks, work well independently and a team setting.

Facilitating participants at both shelters has been successful in several ways, and we have greatly benefited. I have seen the positive impact LEEP work experience has had on not only the participants, but our staff and guests. I hope to see participants that have completed their experience at our sites, applying within Lookout Society, and would recommend them to other leadership teams.

For any follow up questions, please feel free to reach out,

Amy Cummings, Acting Manager (She/Her)
Commercial - Hastings Shelter + Imperial Shelter-325 Main St + Jubilee Shelter -239 Main St
1738 E Hastings St, Vancouver BC V5L 1S9
Lookout Housing + Health Society
Phone: 604-428-2206
Cell: 604-970-6939

Lookout
Housing + Health Society

March 19, 2024

To whom it may concern,

As a former Job Developer of Lookout Ethical Employment Program (LEEP) and acting Manager at Sakura So Shelter, Jeffrey Ross, and ARCH Team, I am elated to provide this letter in support of Lookout Ethical Employment Program (LEEP). LEEP has been very impactful, not only to participants but to employers as well, and its benefits should not be overlooked.

LEEP bridges the gap between job seekers and employers. In my capacity as a former Job Developer, I believe that the work Job developers do go beyond these words. In view of this, participants who end up getting job placements after going through the trainings and curriculum offered by LEEP go above and beyond to "give back" at their workplaces. This has a ripple effect on the employer's investment. Employing a more diverse workforce significantly boosts the Return On Investment of an organization. These benefits manifest as lower staff turnover, better attendance rates, and heightened employee morale, as well as recruitment of talented and committed staff, improved community relations, and exemplification of diversity-related core values.

As a manager who has offered Work Experience placements opportunity to peers, I can attest to this fact. What stands out most about these participants is their tireless work ethic. They approach their tasks with enthusiasm, striving to prove their worth and contribute meaningfully to our day-to-day operations. The LEEP work experience has not only empowered these individuals but has also enriched our tenancy community.

The dedication and commitment of both staff and participants of LEEP make them valuable assets and I wholeheartedly endorse this program in order to offer continued support to the community.

Sincerely,



Jesse Coulson, Acting Manager (he, him)
Sakura So, Jeffrey Ross & ARCH Team
Lookout Housing and Health Society
jesse.coulson@lookoutsociety.ca
C: (604) 374-2735
www.lookoutsociety.ca

Lookout Society, 544 Columbia Street, New Westminster, BC V3L 1B1 T: 604.255-0340 F: 604.255-0790 E: info@lookoutsociety.ca www.lookoutsociety.ca

APPENDIX F: EMPLOYEE TESTIMONIALS

B.G.

Employment Navigator

"As an Employment Navigator with Lookout's LEEP team for over a year now, I've found immense fulfillment in my role. With a diploma in Social Service Work, I entered this field driven by a desire to make a difference in my community and support those in need. Currently stationed in the Vancouver region, I'm part of the LEEP Accelerated Expansion project, focusing on helping individuals in shelters secure meaningful employment opportunities.

Over the past year, I've been privileged to witness numerous success stories within the LEEP Expansion project. Being able to directly contribute to individuals' journeys toward employment and personal growth has been incredibly rewarding. From assisting participants in gaining valuable work experience to providing them with the necessary skills to advance in their careers and personal lives, every milestone achieved fills me with pride.

What truly fuels my passion for this work is seeing the positive impact it has on people's lives. Witnessing the transformation as individuals gain confidence and thrive in their newfound opportunities solidifies my commitment to creating an inclusive and supportive environment for those facing challenges.

In essence, my journey with Lookout's LEEP team has been a deeply gratifying one. I'm honored to be able to play a role in empowering individuals to reach their full potential and contribute to building a stronger, more resilient community."

A.R.

Job Development Coordinator

"Since joining Lookout in January 2023 as an Employment Navigator with the LEEP expansion team and now having transitioned into the Job Developer Coordinator role, every day has been a testament to my passion for the work I do. From supporting youth to elderly individuals grappling with addiction, homelessness, and mental health challenges, I've had the privilege of connecting with a diverse range of people. With years of lived experience complemented by a diploma in social service, I find profound fulfillment in building meaningful relationships with those I serve.

My journey with Lookout has been more than just a job; it's been a calling. Each day presents an opportunity for personal and professional growth, as I continue to refine my skills as a frontline worker and discover new aspects of myself. What resonates most deeply with me are the expressions of appreciation and gratitude from the individuals I support. It's incredibly heartwarming to witness their progress and resilience in the face of adversity.

I often remind my participants that they are the architects of their own journey, and my role is simply to offer guidance and support along the way. The joy I see on their faces when they recognize their own strength and

progress is a constant source of inspiration for me. I am immensely grateful for the opportunity to be a part of their lives and to contribute to our community's collective growth and well-being."

B.H.

Employment Navigator

"During my journey with Lookout, I've had the privilege of serving as an Employment Navigator within the Lookout Ethical Employment Program (LEEP). Simultaneously, I've been pursuing my Bachelor of Social Work, driven by a deep-rooted desire to continue helping those in need.

Working within a smaller team that makes a significant impact across various areas has been incredibly fulfilling. Every day, I'm grateful for the opportunity to extend a helping hand to those facing challenges, providing them with the support and potential employment opportunities that foster independence and responsibility.

As I continue my academic and professional journey, I'm committed to making a positive difference in the lives of individuals in need. The sense of fulfillment I derive from this work reaffirms my dedication to serving my community and advocating for those who require assistance the most."

L.B.

Program Manager

"As someone deeply committed to making a positive impact in the lives of others, my journey in social services has been both fulfilling and transformative. Over the past decade, I've had the privilege of serving in various roles within Lookout Housing and Health, and especially in LEEP from the front line Employment Navigator, to the Job Developer Coordinator, and now as the Program Manager.

Throughout my tenure, I've witnessed firsthand the challenges faced by underserved communities and the vital importance of tailored employment supports. Whether it's overseeing job readiness programs or collaborating with community partners, my approach has always been rooted in empathy, strong interpersonal skills, and a proactive mindset.

One of the guiding principles in my work is the belief in thinking outside the box to overcome obstacles. Finding innovative solutions that truly meet the needs of those we serve has been at the forefront of my mission.

But beyond the professional realm, my greatest joy comes from spending time with my four sons and exploring culinary delights from different cultures. This holistic approach to life fuels my passion for making a meaningful difference, not just within the social services landscape, but in every aspect of my journey."

N.L.

Program Coordinator

"Working with Lookout as a Program Coordinator for the Expedited LEEP project, much of my work occurs behind the scenes with scheduling, budget-tracking and statistic and data analysis. Although I am not out in the field, there is a great sense of gratification that comes with seeing participants' progress from their initial program intakes, through to graduation and employment.

Despite the fact that not everyone completes the program, the meaning that LEEP brings to people's lives is evident even through pictures the Employment Navigators send throughout the course of each cohort. While I am new to this field, it has been a long-term goal of mine to work in the non-profit sector, and provide this type of meaningful service to the members of the community.

I believe that everyone deserves to feel supported and encouraged. Having the opportunity to be included in a project that helps inspire and uplift others is very motivating work. Kindness and compassion can have a ripple effect: by changing a person's situation, we may be able to help them start to create a better life for themselves."

P.B.

Former Employment Navigator

"Having joined Lookout nearly a year ago, I relocated to British Columbia from Ontario last fall, eager to embark on a new chapter. Throughout this time, I've served as an Employment Navigator in the vibrant Vancouver region, contributing to the growth of the LEEP Expansion Project in Downtown Eastside.

My journey in the mental health and addictions sector spans two years before my tenure at Lookout. Rooted in my passion for supporting individuals facing these challenges, I earned my diploma in mental health and addictions in Ontario back in 2021. Prior to Lookout, I gained invaluable experience working in shelters and addiction treatment centres, driven by a desire to make a meaningful difference.

For me, this work is not just a profession, it's personal. Having navigated my own struggles with substance use as a teenager and witnessing loved ones face similar battles, addiction holds a deeply resonant place in my heart. Despite the inherent challenges, I approach each day with compassion and empathy, determined to make a positive impact.

While some may express surprise at my chosen field, I find immense fulfillment in witnessing the transformative power of recovery. Whether it's seeing individuals embrace sobriety, secure stable housing, or find meaningful employment, every success story reignites hope and reinforces my commitment to this work.

What truly drives me is the opportunity to connect with incredible individuals every day. Each encounter brings new faces, new stories, and new possibilities for positive change. Through it all, I remain steadfast in my dedication to personal and professional growth, fueled by the belief that every person deserves compassion, dignity, and a chance at a brighter future."