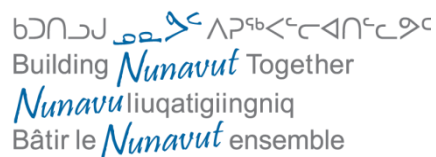


February 2017



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 Department of Family Services

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Introduction

In September 2015, the Department of Family Services and the Nunavut Arctic College (NAC) launched the Getting Ready for Employment and Training Program (G.R.E.A.T. Program), a pilot initiative designed to help Social Assistance clients prepare for employment and/or training opportunities.

Since September 2015, the program has been delivered 15 times in 14 communities to over 160 participants. The program is being offered in 7 new communities in winter 2017.

Table 1: G.R.E.A.T. program delivery to date

September 2015	January 2016	September 2016	January 2017
Iqaluit	Arctic Bay	Sanikiluaq	Kugaaruk
Rankin Inlet	Baker Lake	Cape Dorset	Arviat
Kugluktuk	Gjoa Haven	Nauyasat	Qikiqtarjuaq
	Iqaluit	Coral Harbour	Hall Beach
	Igloolik	Taloyoak	Kimmirut
	Pangnirtung		Clyde River
	Pond Inlet		Sanikiluaq

As part of this pilot project, the Department of Family Services undertook an evaluation of G.R.E.A.T. to gauge the program's success and to support ongoing improvement.

The evaluation focused on the second round of program delivery, which occurred from January to April 2016 in seven communities: Arctic Bay, Baker Lake, Gjoa Haven, Igloolik, Iqaluit, Pangnirtung, and Pond Inlet. This report summarizes key findings from this evaluation and recommendations for continued improvement.

It is important to note that Family Services and NAC make changes to improve the G.R.E.A.T. Program on an ongoing basis. Some of the challenges identified in this evaluation have already been addressed.

What is the Getting Ready for Employment and Training Program?

Curriculum

At the time of evaluation, the program consisted of 10 weeks of in-class training, delivered by Adult Basic Educators and Instructors at NAC, followed by a 2-week work placement with a local employer. The class-based instruction emphasizes essential skills, career exploration, and employability tips and tools.¹ G.R.E.A.T. is open to all Social Assistance clients:

	Portfolio Development	Career College	Communications	ES Numeracy
<u>10 weeks of class training</u>	Explores student skills, knowledge and attitudes, identifies goals, and makes plans to achieve those goals. Students develop a learning portfolio that includes a resume.	Focuses on the development of employability skills and financial literacy skills (e.g. budgeting, banking, financial planning).	Activities to support student reading, document use, and writing skills needed for entry-level occupations.	Activities to support student math operations and calculation skills required for entry-level occupations.
+	<u>2 weeks of supervised work experience with a local employer</u>			

Recruitment and student selection

Recruitment for the January 2016 G.R.E.A.T. program began in the fall of 2015. Staff from Family Services and NAC began advertising the program and recruiting potential candidates. Income Assistance Workers informed Social Assistance clients about the G.R.E.A.T. program at their monthly assessment. Clients that expressed interest in the program were then referred to the NAC Community Learning Centre to complete an academic assessment.²

Once the clients completed the academic readiness assessment, the Adult Educator used academic scores and the community Income Assistance Worker(s) and Career Development Officer had the opportunity to provide other input when selecting up to 12 students to enroll. An important factor in this decision is choosing candidates with similar assessment scores in order to facilitate a learning environment that is tailored to individuals with similar academic needs.

Program supports and incentives for learners

To encourage participation, Family Services and NAC worked together to provide:

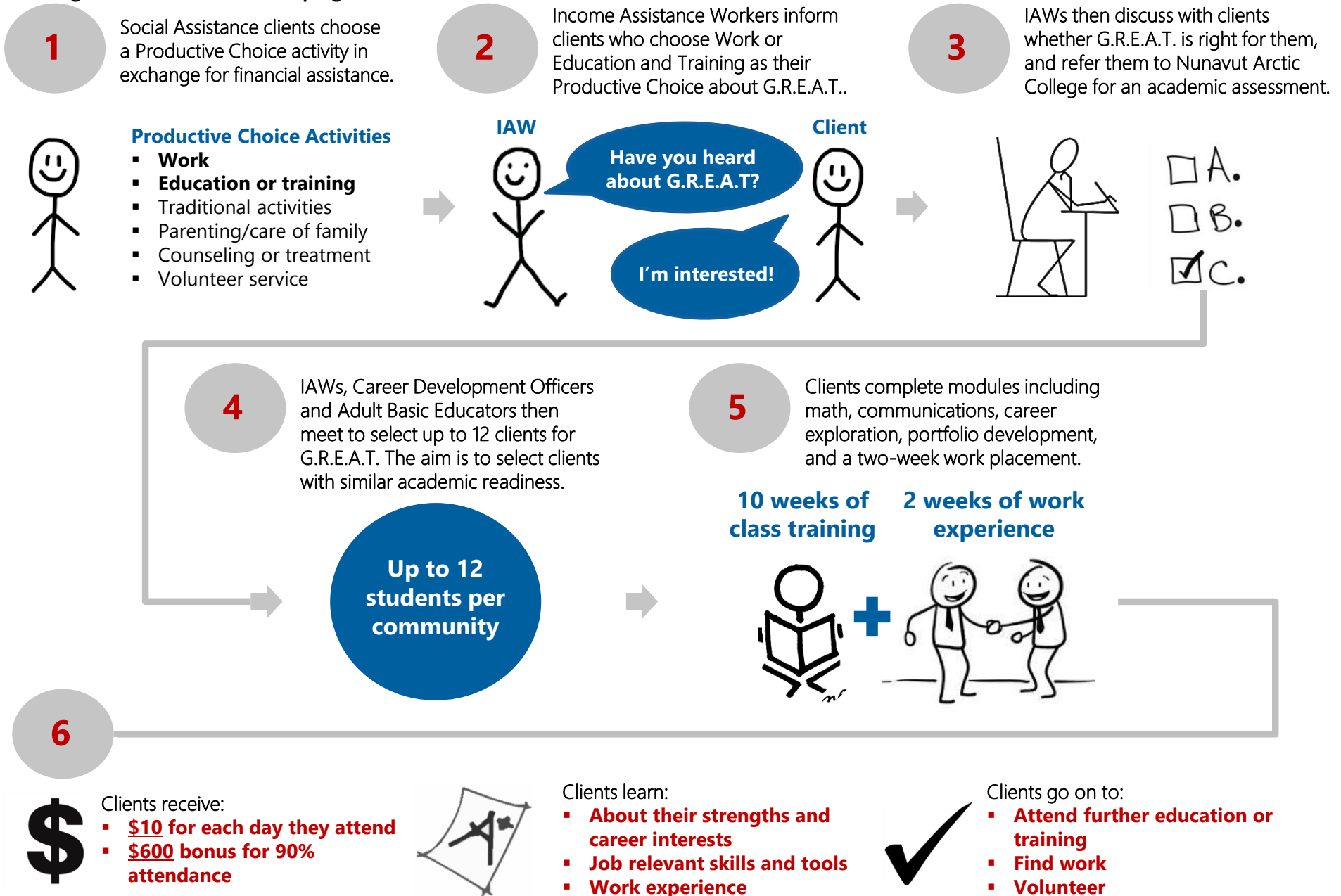
- **Financial incentives**: students received \$10 for each day of attendance, paid bi-weekly. Students that completed the program with 90% attendance or greater also received a bonus of \$600. This money was exempt from income assistance calculations, so it did not affect their received assistance.
- **Breakfast program**: a light breakfast was provided at the beginning of each class day.

Figure 1 on the next page provides a visual overview of a Social Assistance client's path through the G.R.E.A.T. program.

¹ NAC developed the curriculum for G.R.E.A.T..

² Applicants wrote the Nunavut Adult Placement Assessment, which is also required for other NAC programs.

Figure 1: How the G.R.E.A.T. program works



Our approach to evaluating the G.R.E.A.T. program

Information collected about the G.R.E.A.T. program

To support the evaluation, Family Services used a variety of research tools and resources to collect information about the program, including:

- Graduate post-program survey: A survey that students completed at the end of the program that asked G.R.E.A.T. graduates' about their reasons for participation in the program, barriers to participation, and perceptions about the overall quality of the program.
- Employer evaluations of student performance: A survey completed by supervisors of G.R.E.A.T. students at the end of the work placement to assess student on-the-job performance and employer satisfaction.
- Graduate follow-up reporting: Career Development Officers from Family Services contacted G.R.E.A.T. graduates 3 months after finishing the program to learn about their employment status, and current or planned participation in further training or education.
- Semi-structured interviews with G.R.E.A.T. staff and students: Interviews conducted by the G.R.E.A.T. Program Coordinator with staff and students that explored a range of topics:
 - 24 interviews with students (5 Pond Inlet, 5 Pangnirtung, 6 Igloolik, 8 Arctic Bay)
 - 25 interviews with G.R.E.A.T. staff (7 Career Development Officers, 8 Income Assistance Workers, and 10 Adult Basic Educators and/or instructors;
- Nunavut Arctic College program report: A standard end-of-program report completed by Adult Basic Educators and instructors from each community that includes information about student participation and instructor perceptions about the program.

Key questions and layout of this report

In each section, we ask a series of questions about the G.R.E.A.T. Program and answer them using the information we collected:

- Section 1: Participation in the G.R.E.A.T. program: Explores who signed up for the program, their possible motivations, where students did their work experiences, student participation and completion, and barriers that impacted student participation.
- Section 2: Outcomes of the G.R.E.A.T. program: Explores student and employer satisfaction with their experience in the G.R.E.A.T. program, the extent to which graduates learned new skills, and what graduates were doing three months after completing the program.
- Section 3: Analysis of program design and delivery: Analyzes specific aspects of the program in more detail, including client recruitment, student selection, support graduates receive after the program, staff roles and responsibilities, and data collection and reporting.
- Section 4: Progress to date and key findings: Describes progress that Family Services and NAC have made to improve the next round of G.R.E.A.T, summarizes findings from the report, and offers suggestions on how to improve the program.

Section 1: Participation in the G.R.E.A.T. Program

Who participated in the G.R.E.A.T. program?

82 students across 7 communities participated in the G.R.E.A.T. program from January to April 2016. Of these students, 57% were men and 43% were women. The average age was 34 years old. 42% of students had some previous work experience while 26% had previously enrolled in other training. 33% of the overall participants also had children. At the end of the 12-week work readiness program, 61% of students successfully completed the program.

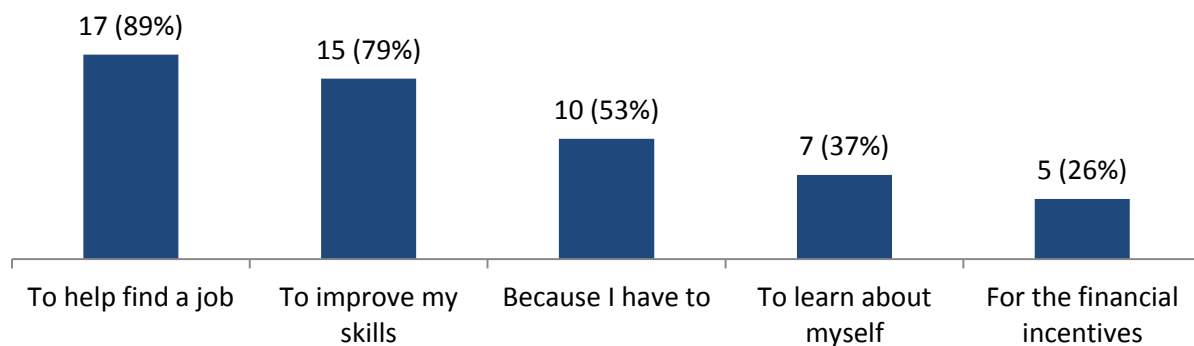
Why did clients sign up for the G.R.E.A.T. program?

G.R.E.A.T. graduates were asked about why they signed up for the program in a post-program survey. Figure 2 presents the responses of the 19 graduates that responded:

- The vast majority of G.R.E.A.T. graduates surveyed signed up to help them get a job (89%) and/or develop their skills (79%).
- Just over half of respondents also reported attending the program because they had to do something in exchange for Social Assistance.
- Some also mentioned that they wanted to learn more about themselves, or that they signed up because of the financial incentives.

"I wanted to refresh all the things I learned in school, all the essential skills and knowledge that are needed for work." – G.R.E.A.T. Student

Figure 2: Reasons for signing up for the G.R.E.A.T. Program. N = 19



Who completed the G.R.E.A.T. program?

A total of 50 students, representing 61% of all participants, completed the G.R.E.A.T. program. Of those 50 students, 59% were men and 41% were women. Graduates of the G.R.E.A.T. program were more likely to have had prior work experience than those who left the program – 52% compared to 23%. Graduates were also more likely to have completed prior training programs (37%) than those who did not graduate (7%).

Table 2 provides an overview of student participation in the G.R.E.A.T. program.

- 82 Income Assistance recipients were enrolled in the program. Of the 82 enrolled, 50 (61%) completed the program. Program completion rates were similar across communities.

- On average, participants attended 65% of the scheduled class time; however, when counting graduates only, the average attendance rate was much higher at 85%. Half of the students that completed (50%) had attendance rates of 90% or higher. They received the \$600 participation bonus.

Table 2: Overview of program participation, G.R.E.A.T. program winter 2016

Community	Participants	Completed	90% attendance	Average attendance (all students)	Average attendance (graduates only)
Arctic Bay	12	8	6	70%	95%
Baker Lake	12	8	5	70%	93%
Gjoa Haven	12	8	2	65%	82%
Igloolik	12	6	4	70%	92%
Iqaluit	10	6	3	59%	83%
Pangnirtung	12	6	2	62%	81%
Pond Inlet	12	8	3	59%	79%
Total	82	50 (61%)	25	65%	85%

Most students that do not complete the program leave in the first few weeks

Table 3 shows the number of students remaining in the program at the end of each week.

- Students are most likely to leave early in the program. Of the 32 leavers, 16 (50%) left the program in the first two weeks. A further 11 left the program in weeks 3-6.
- The student population stabilized for the last half of the program. Only five students left the program during weeks 7-12.

Table 3: Student participation by week of program

Community	Enrolled	W1	W2	W3	W4	W5	W6	W7	W8	W9	W10	W11	W12
Arctic Bay	12	12	9	9	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
Baker Lake	12	11	11	10	10	10	9	9	9	9	9	9	8
Gjoa Haven	12	12	10	10	10	9	9	9	9	9	8	8	8
Igloolik	12	12	10	10	9	9	8	7	6	6	6	6	6
Iqaluit	10	10	7	7	7	7	7	7	6	6	6	6	6
Pangnirtung	12	11	10	9	8	8	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Pond Inlet	12	11	9	9	9	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
Total	82	79	66	64	61	59	55	54	52	52	51	51	50

Who left the G.R.E.A.T. program?

A total of 32 students, representing 39% of all participants, did not complete the G.R.E.A.T. program. Of those 32 students, 54% were men and 46% were women. People who left the

program were less likely to have had prior work experience than those who completed the program – 23% compared to 52%. People who left were also less likely to have completed prior training programs (7%) than those who graduated (37%). People who left the program were more likely to be younger (29 years old was the average age) and have children (42%) than completers – 36 years old and 28%, respectively.

Why did some clients leave the program early?

Twenty of the 32 students that did not complete the program provided reasons for leaving:

- Most (80%) of students left the program for non-academic reasons, including a lack of interest (4), a job opportunity (3), health (2), and childcare (2).
- Four students left the program because they felt it was either too advanced or difficult.

Findings from interviews with G.R.E.A.T. teams also suggest students face a diversity of challenges to participation.³ When asked why students struggle to participate, G.R.E.A.T. staff reported a range of issues, including: a lack of interest, family issues (conflicts, care for family members), health, transportation, housing and difficulty adjusting to a structured environment.

Given the high proportion of students leaving due to non-academic barriers, there may be opportunities to improve the screening process to identify students with barriers to participation before enrolling in the program.

Where did clients do their work experience placements?

Table 4 to the right provides an overview of work placements. Students worked with a diversity of employers:

- The most common employers were grocery stores/restaurants (7).
- A significant proportion of students worked with government or governance organizations, including the Government of Nunavut (6), city/hamlet governments (6), Inuit Associations, and schools/colleges (2). Community organizations (e.g., radio station, arts centres) were also a common employer (6 students)

The diversity of student work experiences generally reflects the local industry. This, combined with the fact that few staff reported difficulties finding work placements for students, suggests broad support among employers for the program.

Table 4: Reasons for signing up for the G.R.E.A.T. Program. N = 19

Employer	Students
Grocery stores/restaurants	7
Government of Nunavut	6
City/hamlet government	6
Community organizations	6
Garage/mechanical	3
Inuit Associations	2
Airport/airlines	2
School/college	2

“Feeling very optimistic for my students. This is a wonderful program for them as they realize they can work anywhere.” – G.R.E.A.T. Program Instructor

³ In each community where G.R.E.A.T. is delivered the frontline staff at Family Services and NAC, along with their managerial support, fulfill the supportive roles needed for the program to function. Specifically these are the Adult Educator and/or instructor at NAC and the Income Assistance Worker(s) and Career Development Officers from Family Services. These make up the community G.R.E.A.T. “team”.

Section 2: Outcomes of the G.R.E.A.T. Program

Were students satisfied with their experience in the G.R.E.A.T. program?

Graduates were asked whether they agreed with a series of statements about their experience in the G.R.E.A.T. Program. Table 6 provides an overview of their responses:

- 100% of responding graduates reported that the topics covered in the G.R.E.A.T. program were 'somewhat interesting' or 'interesting.'
- The majority of G.R.E.A.T. graduates (95%) reported that the topics covered in the program were the right difficulty level.
- 89% of graduates reported they would recommend the program to others.

One exception was student perceptions of the duration of the work placement. The placement was 6.5 work days. In the post-program survey, students were asked how they felt about the duration of the placement. While the majority of graduates surveyed felt that the work placement duration was 'just right,' a significant minority (44%) felt that the placement was too short.

Table 5: Student responses to statements about their experience in G.R.E.A.T. N = 19

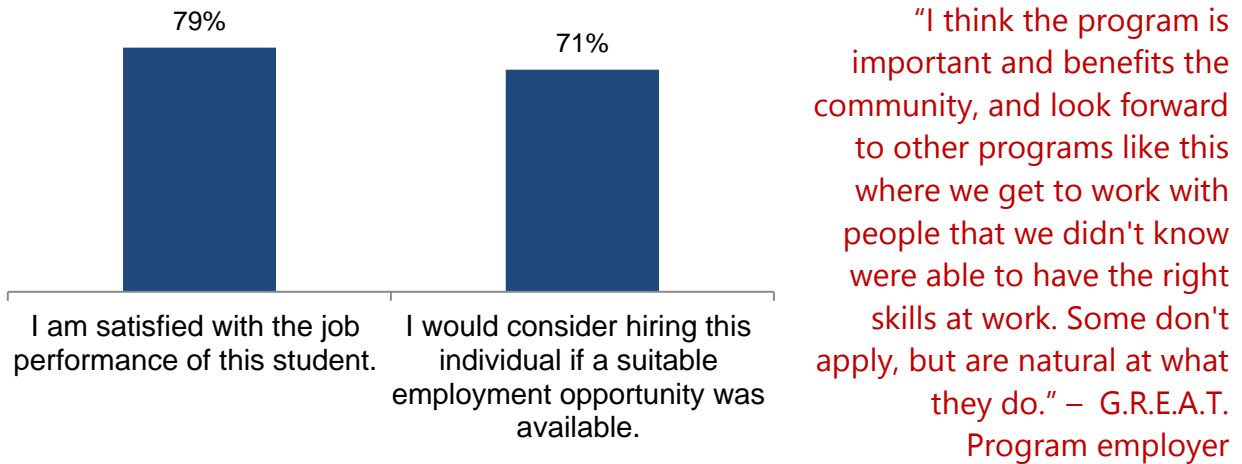
Statement	Responses		
The topics covered in the G.R.E.A.T. program were:	<u>Interesting</u> 11 (58%)	<u>Somewhat interesting</u> 8	<u>Not interesting</u> 0
The topics covered in the G.R.E.A.T. program were:	<u>Just right</u> 18 (95%)	<u>Too easy</u> 1	<u>Too hard</u> 0
I thought the length of the work experience was:	<u>Just right</u> 10 (56%)	<u>Too short</u> 8	<u>Too long</u> 0
"I would recommend the program to others."	<u>Agree</u> 17 (89%)	<u>Neutral</u> 2	<u>Disagree</u> 0

"I liked learning math, because I didn't know math walking in the program, and I can walk out knowing more math than I ever did." – G.R.E.A.T. student

Were employers satisfied with the performance of their G.R.E.A.T. students?

Figure 3 below presents employer responses to questions about their student's work performance. 79% of employers were satisfied or very satisfied with their student's job performance. Most (71%) employers would consider hiring their G.R.E.A.T. student if a suitable job was available. These strong satisfaction figures suggest that students were well prepared to manage their work experience responsibilities.

Figure 3: Percent of participating employers that agree/strongly agree with select statements:



Did graduates learn new skills in the G.R.E.A.T. program?

Graduates were asked whether they agreed with a series of statements about the skills they learned in the G.R.E.A.T. program. Table 6 below provides an overview of responses from the 19 students that completed the post-program survey:

- The majority of G.R.E.A.T. graduates (74%) reported that they learned new skills in the program.
- G.R.E.A.T. graduates perceive the skills taught in the program as job-relevant: 63% of graduates reported being able to apply skills learned in class during their job placement, and 95% graduates felt as though the program will help them find a job.
- Students also reported being motivated to use the skills they learned in the future (84%).

Table 6: Graduate responses to statements about skills learned in the G.R.E.A.T. program

Statement	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
"I learned new skills in the G.R.E.A.T. program."	14 (74%)	4	1
"I was able to apply things I learned in the classroom in my work experience placement."	12 (63%)	5	2
"I am motivated to apply the skills I learned in the G.R.E.A.T. program."	16 (84%)	3	0
"The G.R.E.A.T. program will help me find a job."	18 (95%)	1	0

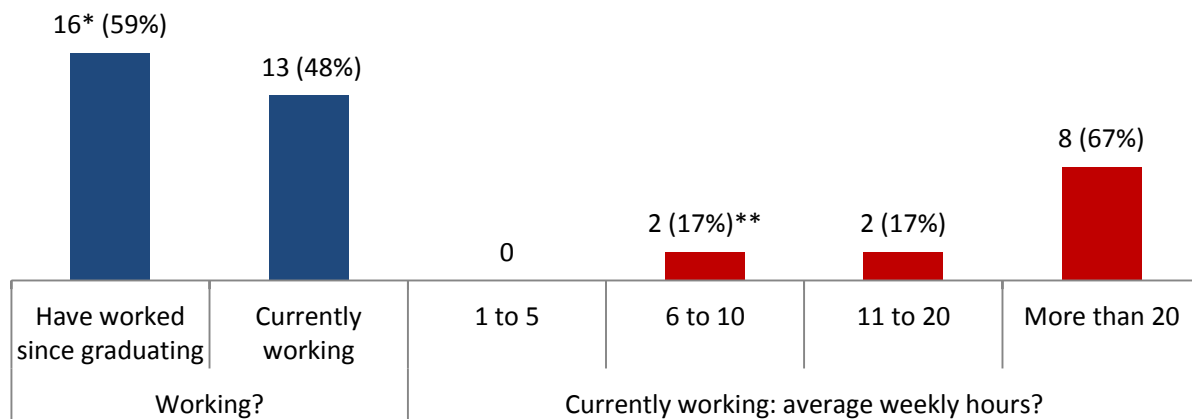
"The structure got me back into routine, reinforced my education skills, and I did work long forgotten." – G.R.E.A.T. Student

Three months after the program, how many graduates were employed or in further education or training?

Family Services followed-up with G.R.E.A.T. graduates 3 months after the program to learn about whether they were employed or in training. 27 of 50 graduates (54%) responded to the survey. Figure 4 presents information about graduate employment:

- 15 of the 27 (56%) graduates that responded reported that they had worked in the past three months, including 13 (48%) that were still working at the time of the survey. Most employed graduates (67%) work more than 20 hours per week.

Figure 4: G.R.E.A.T. graduate employment 3 months post-program



* Includes one graduate that volunteered

** 1 of 13 respondents did not indicate how many hours worked, and were excluded

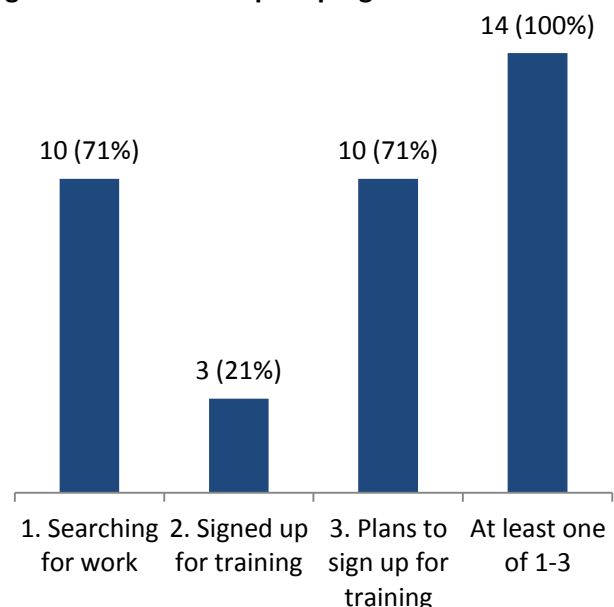
Graduates who were not working were searching for work or training

The 3-month follow-up survey also asked graduates about whether they were signed up for or planned to attend further training, and whether they were searching for work.

Fourteen G.R.E.A.T. graduates that responded to the 3-month follow-up survey reported that they were not currently working. Figure 5 to the right presents information about their current activities:

- All fourteen reported at least one of searching for work, being signed up for training, or planning to sign up for training.
- The most common responses of post-program activity from non-employed graduates were job search (71%) and plans to sign up for training (71%).

Figure 5: Activities of non-employed G.R.E.A.T. graduates 3 months post-program



Section 3: Analysis of program design and delivery

Did the bonus incentive for attendance encourage student participation?

When asked about whether the attendance incentives and breakfast motivated participation, the majority of G.R.E.A.T. staff and many G.R.E.A.T. students perceived the incentives to have a positive effect on attendance.

One way to check whether the \$600 incentive motivated participation is to compare the attendance rates of students that lost the \$600 (because they missed too many days) *before and after the class day that they lost their \$600 bonus*.

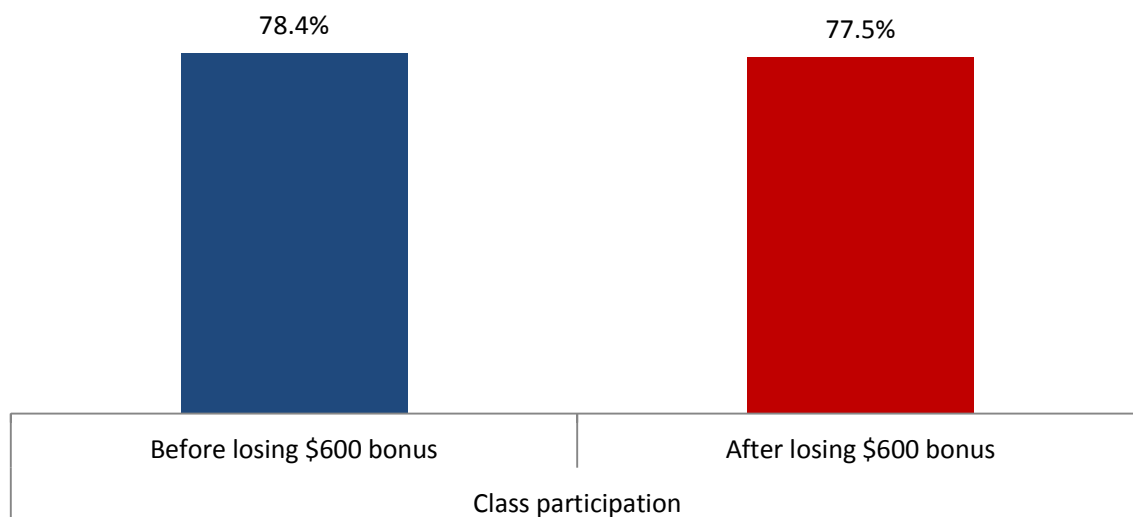
- If attendance of these students dropped after the day that they lost their \$600 bonus, then that might be an indication that the \$600 incentive was motivating them to show up. In other words, when students no longer have the opportunity to gain \$600, do they keep showing up to class at the same rate?

Figure 6 shows the average attendance rates of students before and after they lost the \$600 participation bonus

- For the group of 25 students that still completed the program but lost their \$600 bonus, their attendance before and after losing the \$600 was nearly identical – 78.4% before the day that they lost the \$600, and 77.5% after the day that they lost the \$600.

This does not necessarily mean that the financial incentive is not effective at encouraging participation – the number of students monitored is very small (25) and we will need to evaluate the attendance of more students before making strong conclusions; however at this point in time, we have no evidence to suggest that the participation incentive encourages students to show up for class.

Figure 6: Participation of G.R.E.A.T. graduates that did not receive the \$600 bonus, before and after losing the \$600 bonus



Evidence suggests staff can do more to engage graduates about their plans

At the end of the program, graduates were asked about whether they were working with Family Services staff to discuss plans for after G.R.E.A.T.

- Of the 19 graduates that responded, only 7 (37%) agreed with the statement “My CDO helps me make a plan for my career; and only 8 (42%) agreed with the statement “My IAW and I have talked about what I will do next for my Productive Choice.”
- Just over half (53%) of graduates reported feeling supported by their CDO. This figure may be impacted by the fact that there are not CDOs in every community – some graduates must access a CDO by phone in another community.
- When interviewed about their experience delivering the program, several NAC and Family Services G.R.E.A.T. staff also expressed a desire for a G.R.E.A.T. focus on career planning for after the program.

“There should be guidance and counselling support for G.R.E.A.T. students” – G.R.E.A.T. Instructor

Table 7: Graduate responses to statements about support received to plan their future

Statement	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
“My Career Development Officer helps me make a plan for my career.”	7 (37%)	8	4
“My Income Assistance Worker and I have talked about what I will do next for my Productive Choice after the G.R.E.A.T. program.”	8 (42%)	7	4
“Overall, I feel supported by my Career Development Officer.”	10 (53%)	5	4
“Overall, I feel supported by my Income Assistance Worker.”	13 (68%)	3	3

Working relationships between Family Services and NAC G.R.E.A.T. roles improved over time

Family Services and NAC employees who fulfilled a role in the G.R.E.A.T. program were asked about challenges they experienced in their roles, responsibilities and reporting, and how we can improve the way staff work together going forward. Interviews suggest that staff generally felt that roles and responsibilities became clearer over the duration of the program. Given that this was the first time delivering the program for most staff, some degree of learning how to work with each other was expected. Looking to the next round of G.R.E.A.T., primary areas of concern included:

- Following up with absent students: staff held differing opinions about who should be responsible for following up with absent students and encouraging them to participate.
- Involvement in recruitment and student selection: some Instructors and Career Development Officers expressed a desire to be more involved in informing Social Assistance clients about the program and in selecting candidates for the program.

Many Family Services and NAC employees working on G.R.E.A.T. expressed their appreciation for the G.R.E.A.T. Program Coordinator and noted this role's importance in improving communications and working relationships between staff over time. G.R.E.A.T. staff perceived the Program Coordinator as easy to access, responsive, and well-placed to take initiative to solve issues raised by Family Services and NAC staff throughout the program.

There are opportunities to improve client recruitment and assessment

Recruiting more candidates for academic assessment

One challenge experienced across all participating communities was recruiting enough Social Assistance clients to complete Nunavut Arctic College's academic readiness assessment.

- Generally, educators tried to admit candidates with similar academic assessment scores. However, to compensate for low recruitment in some communities, educators admitted students with a wider variation in academic ability in an effort to fill the classroom.
- This created challenges for instructors, who had to teach students with different skill levels; and for students, who could get bored (when the instruction is too easy or difficult).

The two most common suggestions to improve recruitment were: (1) stronger use of local marketing tools, primarily local radio, local postings, and Facebook; and (2) a longer recruitment period to identify more potential candidates.

Informing potential candidates about the program

At least one frontline Family Services or NAC worker in most communities reported difficulties explaining the program to potential candidates, or expressed concern that some G.R.E.A.T. coworkers were not adequately knowledgeable about the program in order to discuss it with clients. Family Services provided G.R.E.A.T. teams with some basic information about the program, including a one-page overview of G.R.E.A.T., to discuss with clients. However, interviews with staff revealed a desire for more information and resources to help with explaining the program.

Improving frontline staff knowledge is especially important for Income Assistance Workers: when asked how clients found out about the program, the majority of students interviewed mentioned "from their Income Assistance Worker."

Consistency of client screening across communities

To help screen in potential students, Family Services provided Income Assistance Workers with a check-list to use when discussing the program with clients and determining whether to send a client to NAC for an academic assessment, including whether the client is interested in the program, has childcare needs, or has other barriers that may prevent participation.

However, when asked about how they determined which candidates to send for academic assessment, Workers discussed a variety of other information they used to screen clients:

- Workers in some communities only screened in clients who had not completed high school, while Workers in other communities specifically searched for high school graduates.

- Other common approaches to screening clients included ‘what a Worker knew about the client’, whether the client was interested in participating, and whether the client ‘really needed a job.’

The variation in how clients are screened suggests a need to clarify and strengthen the consistency in the screening process. And, the use of prior education as a proxy for suitability is unnecessary, as the next step in the process for candidates is to conduct an academic assessment. This is a more accurate, up-to-date assessment of skills than prior education.

Staff and students made recommendations to improve program relevance

Several employees and students voiced concerns about specific aspects of the curriculum during the interview process. The two most common topics discussed were:

- Relevance to Nunavut: some employees and students noted that course materials still referenced the Northwest Territories. Strengths were noted by employees and students as well. For example, the curriculum incorporates the ‘building blocks of an igloo’ as an analogy to the foundations of a well-rounded human being.
- Timing of Portfolio Development module: the Portfolio Development module requires students to reflect on their challenges, strengths and life goals. In the January-April 2016 round of G.R.E.A.T. Portfolio Development happened at the beginning of the course. Several staff and students felt that the module was ‘evasive,’ and suggested that it should come later in the program once students and instructors are comfortable with each other.

Lastly, as part of the post-program survey, students were asked about what they didn’t enjoy about the program, and what changes they would make to the program. 75% of G.R.E.A.T. graduates from Iqaluit and Gjoa Haven mentioned lapses in internet connections and slow computers. There were no mentions of technical issues reported by students in Baker Lake, and Family Services did not receive survey data from the other 4 communities.

Low response rates prevented deeper analysis of program

G.R.E.A.T. staff worked to collect a range of information about the quality of the program through the use of surveys. Table 8 provides information about their response rates:

- Instructors tracked attendance for 100% of students. The Program Coordinator invested substantial time in ensuring attendance data were reported to Family Services weekly.
- The other three surveys administered had much lower response rates. Time constraints prevented the evaluator from exploring the reasons for the low response rates.
- The small number of responses to these surveys combined with their concentration in only a few communities limits the generalizability of findings that use this survey data.

Table 8: Overview of survey response rates, G.R.E.A.T. program January-April 2016

Survey	# responding	Response rate	Communities with no responses
Student attendance tracking	82/82	100%	0/7
Employer-student evaluation	14/50	28%	3/7
Student post-program survey	19/50	38%	4/7
3-month post-program graduate follow-up	27/50	54%	1/7

Lastly, it is important to note that both the Department of Family Services and Nunavut Arctic College administered post-program surveys to students collecting a similar range of information. This duplication may be an inefficient use of staff and student time.

Section 4: Progress, key findings and recommendations

Family Services and NAC progress in improving the G.R.E.A.T. Program

The G.R.E.A.T. team prioritizes and invests in continuous improvement

G.R.E.A.T. staff from Family Services and NAC have built-in processes for how they work together to continuously identify challenges and collaboratively build solutions to these challenges.

- Regular engagement with employees at all levels of G.R.E.A.T.: For example, the G.R.E.A.T. Program Coordinator traveled to communities before or during the program to help orient staff, and meet with staff and participants to learn about their experience in the program. The Program Coordinator continues to travel on an as needed basis.
- Ongoing tracking of areas to improve: Part of the Program Coordinator's ongoing responsibilities is to gather regular evaluations information from students along with Family Services and NAC employees to learn about challenges, progress, and areas to improve.
- Commitment to problem-solving: When issues were identified, NAC and Family Services leadership systematically analyzed them to determine "which problems we can solve immediately, and which ones we can address for the next round of the program."
- Investments in monitoring and evaluation: G.R.E.A.T. leadership were strongly supportive of evaluating the G.R.E.A.T. program, and worked with their staff to administer the survey and interview methods used to support this evaluation.

"For each classroom of students, the Instructors, Income Assistance Workers and Career Development Officers are working so closely together for the first time. Our shared purpose through these different roles is the success of students." – Program Coordinator

The G.R.E.A.T. team has made notable improvements for the next round of programming:

With the next round of G.R.E.A.T scheduled for September 2016, staff from Family Services and NAC worked to make the following changes to the program:

- Longer recruitment period: To maximize the number of potential candidates, the recruitment period was extended several months, and began in April 2016.
- Extended work-placement: Student work placements will be 8.0 days this round, up from 6.5 days during the January-April round of G.R.E.A.T. The work placement will also occur one-week earlier in the program, to allow an opportunity for students and instructors to debrief about their experience and spend more time updating their resumes.
- Delayed Portfolio Development module: To address student and staff concerns about the sensitivity of personal issues discussed during Portfolio Development, it was moved to later in the course to allow students and instructors to first build relationships with each other.

- Added Computer module: The next round of G.R.E.A.T. will be extended by two-weeks to incorporate an additional “Introduction to Computers” module.
- Investments in staff orientation and knowledge: Family Services and Nunavut Arctic College held orientation meetings with G.R.E.A.T. staff in each community.

Summary of program strengths

1. Clients sign up for G.R.E.A.T. to build their skills and help find work

- The vast majority of G.R.E.A.T. graduates surveyed signed up to help them get a job (89%) and/or develop their skills (79%). Many (37%) also signed up to learn more about themselves.

2. G.R.E.A.T. graduates reported strong, positive learning experiences

- 100% of responding graduates reported that the topics covered in the G.R.E.A.T. program were ‘somewhat interesting’ or ‘interesting.’ and 89% of graduates reported they would recommend the program to others.

3. Evidence suggests that the G.R.E.A.T. program is achieving its objectives:

- The majority of graduates (74%) reported learning new skills in the program, and are motivated to apply these skills in their future careers (84%).
- Three months after the program ended, a significant portion of graduates were working (48%). Most of these graduates reported working more than 20 hours a week.

4. Participating employers were satisfied with the performance of their students

- 79% percent of employers were satisfied or very satisfied with their student’s job performance, and most (71%) employers would consider hiring their G.R.E.A.T. student if a suitable job was available.
- All graduates found work placements and these work placements generally reflected local industry, suggesting broad employer support for the G.R.E.A.T. program.

5. Flexible student selection process helps maximize program ‘fit’

- The ability of NAC to substitute higher or lower-level skills modules depending on the skill levels of students in each community allows the program to be tailored to the needs of students.
- While challenges remain in recruiting students with similar skill levels, the majority of G.R.E.A.T. graduates (95%) reported that the topics covered in the program were the right level of difficulty.

6. Leadership and focus on continuous improvement has been critical to the success of the G.R.E.A.T. program

- G.R.E.A.T. is an innovative collaboration between the Income Assistance and Career Development divisions at Family Services and NAC.

- Staff at all levels of both organizations have demonstrated strong and sustained leadership as they learn how best to work together.
- In particular, their commitment to continuous improvement is a strong example of how government organizations can work together to achieve positive change for Nunavummiut.
- Many areas for improvement identified in this evaluation were already noted by G.R.E.A.T. staff, and substantial progress has been made in addressing many of these areas of improvement over the summer of 2016.

Opportunities for ongoing improvement

1. Strengthen client screening process

Standardize the client screening process: Family Services should work with its frontline staff to develop a common approach to determining which Social Assistance clients are referred to NAC for an academic assessment.

- While Family Services provided Income Assistance Workers with a 'check-list' to help screen candidates, interviews with Income Assistance Workers revealed a diverse range of strategies used to determine which clients to send for academic assessment. Many of these strategies relied on the client's education history.
- Income Assistance Workers do not need to make assessments of candidate academic skill levels, because these are tested directly at the academic assessment. Workers should instead focus on identifying and discussing potential barriers to participation in the course.

Explore ways to strengthen the role of Career Development Officers in screening clients: Career Development Officers have expertise in working with individuals to explore their career interests and help connect them with the supports they need to succeed.

- Involving Career Development Officers more heavily in client screening will improve the identification of clients with barriers to participation and help connect these clients to services and supports they need.
- While Career Development Officers currently help with the final round of student selection, they are not usually involved in the initial screening process. A high proportion of students left the program early on for non-academic reasons.

2. Explore ways to strengthen student career planning for after the program

For example, Family Services could make career planning sessions a mandatory component of the program, or as a mandatory component of a client's Productive Choice under their Social Assistance. Another option would be for Career Development Officers to provide job-placement help to graduates by brokering employment opportunities for a client with local employers.

- At the end of the G.R.E.A.T. program, less than half of graduates surveyed reported meeting with their Career Development Officer or Income Assistance Worker to discuss the next step in their career development.

3. Continue clarifying staff roles and responsibilities

While substantial progress has been made in clarifying working relationships between G.R.E.A.T. partners, there are still opportunities to improve. These include:

- Reporting student absences and following up with absent students; and
- Data collection and reporting

While most communities that operated the G.R.E.A.T. program were able to delineate roles and responsibilities for staff, certain responsibilities, specifically around following up with absent students and data collection, were consistently discussed by Family Services and NAC staff during interviews as areas for further clarification. Family Services and NAC should standardize responsibilities for these tasks to ensure they are completed.

4. Continue monitoring student perceptions about the work experience

Following the January 2016 delivery of G.R.E.A.T., Family Services and Nunavut Arctic College extended the work placement from 6.5 days to 8 days on the job. The partners should continue to monitor student perceptions about the work experience to determine whether the extension from 6.5 days to 8 days was sufficient to address student concerns.

- Nearly half (44%) of G.R.E.A.T. graduates felt that the work experience component was too short, while the other 56% of graduates felt that the duration of the work experience was 'just right.'
- Most G.R.E.A.T. students had little difficulty finding an employer for their work experience. This combined with the diversity of employers that supported the program, suggests that a slight expansion of the work experience placement is feasible.

5. Engage employers on the design and delivery of G.R.E.A.T.

Employer engagement allows governments to design training programs that align with employer hiring needs, increasing the chances that graduates of these programs will go on to find jobs. One option would be to include employer site-visits on the G.R.E.A.T. Program Coordinator's visits to each community that delivers G.R.E.A.T. Another would be to recruit a group of employers to conduct a focus group about the program, or as an advisory board to the program.

- A key finding from research on training programs is that they are more effective when employers are engaged and involved in designing how the program works.
- While a strength of G.R.E.A.T. was that staff followed-up with employers about their work placement experience, employers were not engaged in the design of the curriculum or student supports of the program. As a result, there may be opportunities to continue tailoring the program to better meet the needs of local labour markets.

6. Improve compliance with reporting requirements

Introduce a pre-program survey for G.R.E.A.T. students: The survey would collect information about student perceptions and attitudes towards learning and their careers; reasons for joining; and barriers to participation.

- While this evaluation collected substantial information about G.R.E.A.T. graduates, there was limited information available about students that did not finish the program.

- A pre-program survey would allow the partners to develop a greater understanding of how graduates differ from non-graduates, which would help better identify student success factors and barriers to participation.

Work with NAC to reduce duplication in data collection: NAC and Family Services should work together to identify opportunities to integrate and streamline their data collection, for example by developing common student survey tools. This may require the two parties to work together to create an information-sharing agreement.

- Both NAC and Family Services administered surveys to students seeking their input and feedback. Some of these surveys collected similar and/or identical information.
- Streamlining data collection would reduce staff time spent collecting student information, and reduce time spent by students filling out forms.

Praise for G.R.E.A.T.

"We are so proud of the graduating students!" – Career Development Officer

The G.R.E.A.T. program has given me my confidence back, towards myself and others." – Student

"He found out he could do a lot of things he didn't think he could do." – Income Assistance Worker

"There are things I learned in this course that I had forgotten, but I know now that these things are essential for both my life and my work." – Student

"Students are motivating too – we are motivating each other." – Instructor

"We now have expectations for ourselves and our families." – Student

"The course provides us with a structured environment, showing us how the world works and how to work with it." – Student

"The students are quite pleased with themselves seeing how skilled they are and what knowledge they possess. Self-esteem was raised to the ceiling!" – Instructor

"All students reported very positive experiences at their placements. I am very proud of all of them." – Instructor

"The program goes along with Inuit values and culture, so it has taught me to appreciate my culture even more." – Student

"I think the program is important and benefits the community." – Work experience supervisor

"This course has made me respect myself more. I know now, no matter what challenges life puts me through, I can overcome them." – Student

"The effectiveness of this course is due to our instructor. She was always prepared and put in many extra hours for us and made it easy to come to class." – Student

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Appendix: Data considerations for the G.R.E.A.T. program evaluation

There are several limitations to the data that affect our confidence in the accuracy and generalizability of our findings:

1. **Limited information about non-completers** – most data collected about G.R.E.A.T. students were from students that *completed the program*, while there is limited information about students that started but *did not complete the program*. As a result, information collected from student interviews and the two student surveys is biased towards graduate perceptions. Future rounds of the G.R.E.A.T. program should seek means to further understand the experiences of non-completers as a way of understanding how to make the program better.
2. **Small sample sizes** – the G.R.E.A.T. program has a relatively small number of students, and these students are spread across many communities. Because of this, there are limitations to using information collected about this round of the program to make generalizations about how the program is working.
3. **Lack of a comparison group** – to properly assess the impact of the G.R.E.A.T. program on student skills, further training and employment, we would need to compare G.R.E.A.T. graduates to a group of similar Nunavummiut that did not take the program (i.e. a comparison group). The lack of a control group makes it challenging to assess the impact of the program on students. For example, of all the graduates that got jobs, how many of them got jobs *because* of the program? How many would have found jobs anyway, even without participating? We cannot answer this question directly, but we can answer it indirectly by comparing G.R.E.A.T. graduates to a group of people with similar characteristics that did not take the program.
4. **Three-month follow up as a proxy for long-term outcomes of training** – research suggests that student outcomes 3-months after a training program are not a good indicator of long-term employment (Heckman & Smith, 2007). While being employed or in training 3 months after the program is a positive sign, it in no way suggests that graduates will

continue with steady employment. Longer-term data collection would be required to understand long-term outcomes of the G.R.E.A.T. program.