



**Social Return on Investment (SROI) Analysis  
of the Sowing for Jobs Program**

**April 16, 2014**

## Executive Summary

- EcoEquitable (EE) is a social enterprise in Ottawa that strives to improve employment opportunities for marginalized populations in Ottawa, specifically women, immigrants and refugees, unemployed and part time workers.
- This analysis is the Social Return on Investment (SROI) of the “Sowing for Jobs” program from January 2012 to May 2013, which merges three continuous cohorts.
- The first SROI analysis model was designed and conducted in 2012 by Simon Anderson, Senior SROI Analyst with SAM (Social Assets Measurement). The current SROI analysis was conducted based on the same model and consultation with Simon Anderson.
- The key outcomes include: employment, self-esteem, social networks, health, and sewing skills.
- To generate a benefit-cost framework for the program and conduct the SROI analysis, financial proxies were attached to some of the outcomes. These financial proxies were used for the outcomes including: increase in income, reduction in social support (social transfers and cost of visiting a Food Bank), cost of visiting a doctor, tax revenues, and revenue for EE.
- The adjustments for the analysis include: the “Deadweight” was determined by asking participants the extent to which EE influenced particular outcomes, the “Attribution” was determined to be 13%, and the “Dropoff” was deemed to be 0% because the time horizon for the outcomes was limited, ranging from 1 to 3 years.
- The results of the analysis find that: 4 of the 12<sup>1</sup> respondents found full - time employment and 3 found part-time employment; 9 respondents cited that being involved with EE helped to reduce their stress; 3 participants claimed that EE helped to improve their health; 1 participant reported visiting the doctor less; 10 respondents cited an increase in the strength of their social networks; the program improved the participants knowledge of sowing; and 9 respondents found that EE helped them to increase their self-esteem.
- Using the results from the surveys and the identified Financial Proxies, it was determined that the total benefits are \$358,767.35 and the total costs are \$78,182. This leads to a SROI ratio of \$4.59:\$1.00

---

<sup>1</sup> Note that 10 respondents did the follow-up surveys. The other 2 participants found employment through EE and are still in touch with EE. That is the reason as to why these two participants were included in the category of the respondents.

## 1. Introduction

EcoEquitable (EE) is a registered charitable organization founded in 2002 with the vision of having an inclusive sustainable society where all can realize their full potential. EE's mission is to provide a bridge to social and economic integration for people in need, especially immigrant women, while greening the community. To achieve this mandate, EE offers "Sowing for Jobs" training program, which is a holistic package of services and training to unemployed immigrant women in need with the intent of increasing their sewing skills, social networks and employability, thereby improving their standard of living. This includes a 5-month sewing training program, which focuses on practical skills that are learned through hands-on experience, financial literacy training, networking activities, and job placement in the sewing sector. As a result of all these services, the participants become empowered and more employable in the Canadian labor market.

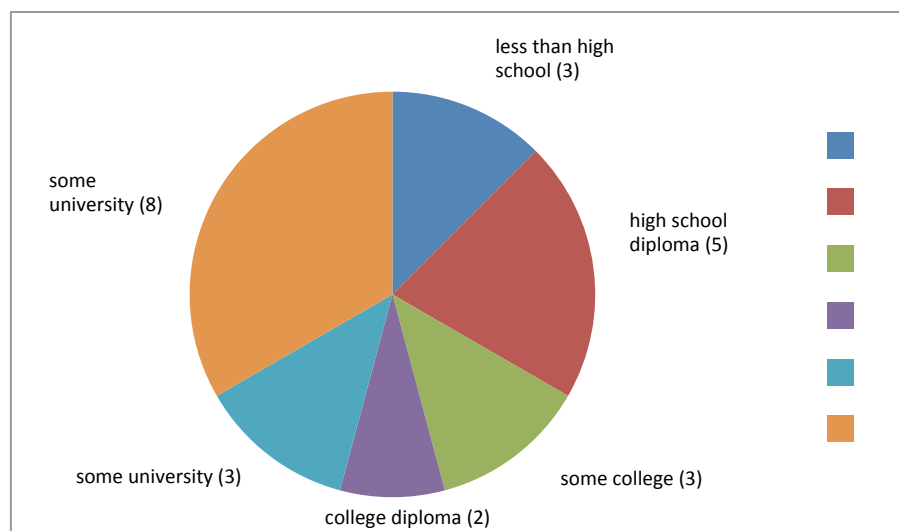
The objective of this research is to provide a social return on investment (SROI) analysis of the "Sowing for Jobs" program. The first SROI analysis, which evaluated the "Sowing for Jobs" program in 2011, was conducted by Simon Anderson, Senior SROI Analyst with SAM (Social Assets Measurement) in Toronto. He has developed a model that outlines how "Sowing for Jobs" creates change for the participants. The results determined that the program positively impacts the employment, self esteem, social networks, health and sewing skills of the participants. In addition, using the results from the surveys and the identified financial proxies, it was determined that total benefit was \$17,102.05 and the total costs were \$72,153, which leads to a SROI ratio of \$1.52:\$1.00.

The first section of the report is the introduction; the second section outlines the demographic profile of the "Sowing for Jobs" participants; the next session explains the methodological approach; the fourth section highlights the results; the fifth section explains the calculations; and the last section concludes.

## 2. Demographic Profile of Sowing for Jobs Participants

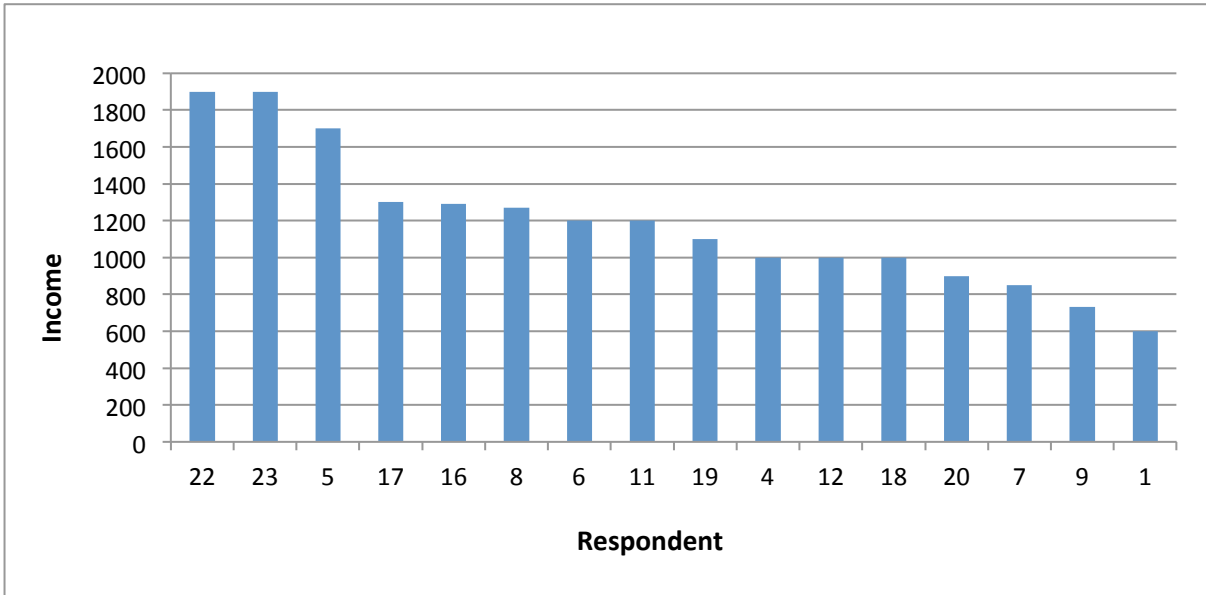
To provide some context regarding the demographic profile of the participants of the “Sowing for Jobs” program, the following will outline information regarding the gender, age, education, and employment status of the participants, which were collected at the beginning of the program. The survey revealed that %87.5 of the program participants were women. As for the age range, the average age was 41 years old, with the youngest at 20 years old and the eldest at 55 years old. This represents a wide spread in the ages of the women which implies varying levels of experience and some implications for the program at EE. With respect to education level, 3 participants had not completed high school, 5 had high school diploma, 3 had some college experience, 2 had a college degree, 3 had some university experience, and 8 had university degree (see figure #1 below).

**Figure #1: Education Levels of the Sowing for Jobs Program Participants  
(in brackets is the number of responses)**



As for the income of the Sowing for Jobs participants, four of the participants reported monthly incomes between \$500 - \$900, twelve cited monthly incomes between \$1000 – \$1900, while seven reported no income. (See figure #2 below). It should be noted that one participant did not respond.

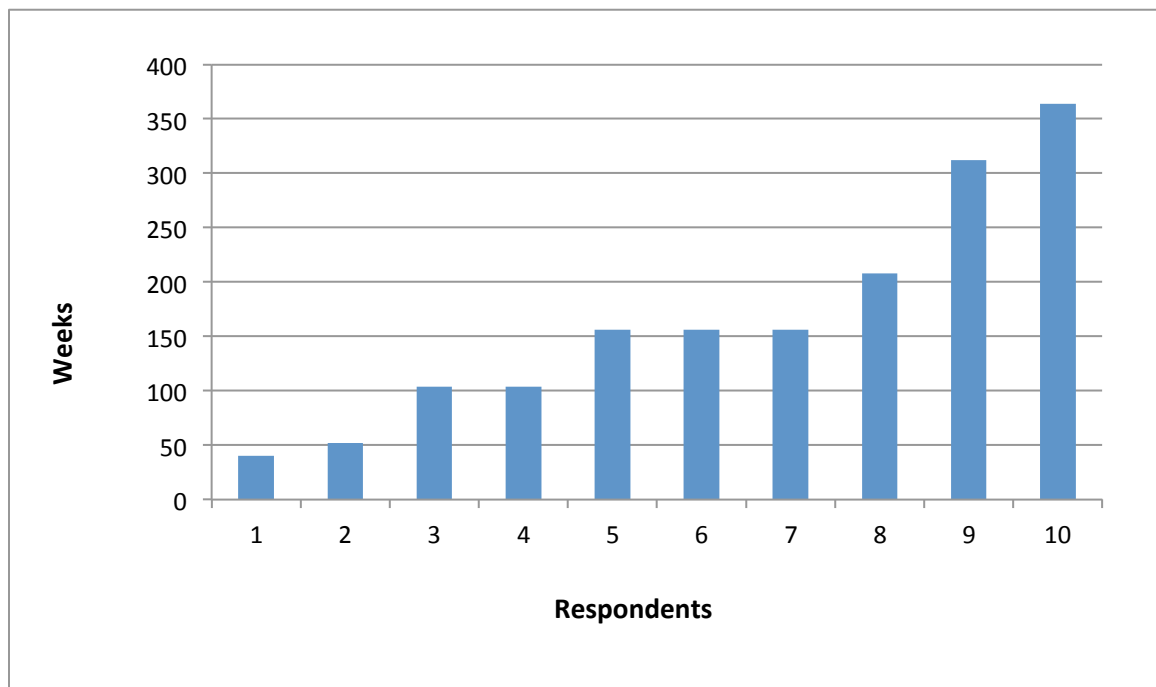
**Figure #2: Monthly Income of Sowing for Jobs Participants**



However, it should be noted that the graph above includes income transfers from the government. When these transfers are removed, the income earnings for the Sowing for Jobs participants are much bleaker. Of the participants, three reported incomes of \$650, \$1000, and \$300, nineteen reported no income, and one did not respond.

As for employment, three cited having part time jobs while nineteen reported being unemployed. In regards to the duration of unemployment, four respondents recorded between 40-104 weeks and six participants cited between 156 – 364 weeks. The other thirteen participants did not respond (see figure #3 below).

**Figure #3 Duration of Unemployment (in weeks)**



### 3. Methodology

The SROI model for “Sowing for Jobs” program was developed by Simon Anderson, the Senior SROI Analyst with SAM (Social Assets Measurement) in Toronto in 2011. The first SROI analysis was conducted by Simon Anderson for the first “Sowing for Jobs” program in July 2011. This model identifies the key outcomes of the program and the major stakeholders, determines the financial proxies, and explains the adjustments including duration of the impact of the program, deadweight, i.e. assessing and adjusting for how the participants would have fared in the absence of the “Sowing for Jobs” program, attribution, i.e. contribution of other organizations into the outcomes of the program for participants, and drop off.

The current analysis evaluates the “Sowing for Jobs” program from January 2012 to May 2013, which merges three cohorts. To conduct this analysis, the EE Program Coordinator administered the baseline surveys at the first day of the program and the final surveys six months after completion of the program. The baseline surveys had a 100% completion rate. However, the final survey, which was issued 6 months after the project proved to be more difficult to administer. After numerous attempts to call and deliver the survey to the participants, 12 surveys from 23 were completed.

In order to use the model and conduct the SROI analysis, the Program Coordinator had a couple of conversations over the phone with Simon Anderson. She sought his advice for each step and solicited his feedback. At the end, Simon reviewed the report and provided his comments and recommendations.

The data was entered into SROI framework where the outcomes could be analyzed. The cost of the Sowing for Jobs program was done through examining the Financial Statements and discussing with the Interim ED. Through this work, it was determined that the three cohorts cost total \$78,182.

### 4. Results:

The following section will highlight the results of the SROI analysis and highlight key findings. It should be noted that some results could not be monetized, i.e. they are not included in the SROI ratio. However, these impact areas are significant elements of the Sowing for Jobs program and were included in the surveys and final analysis.

In regards to the employment of the program participants, three people found part-time jobs, four people found full-time jobs, four people remained unemployed and one had not any change in employment status. She had been a part-time employee before starting the program and had the same status six months after the program.

The following table illustrates the participants’ income before and after the program and the difference in transfer payments:

Of seven participants who found employment, 5 individuals experienced transfer reduction. As for the individuals who found part time employment, one began earning \$400 / month and as a result of increase in income, she reduced the cost to government, government transfer, by \$300/ month. The other participant earned \$1500 / month from her employment and reduced cost to the government by \$733/month. Another participant who gained a full-time employment after the program reduced the cost to the government by \$1290/ month. One respondent started earning \$1500 / month and had a transfer

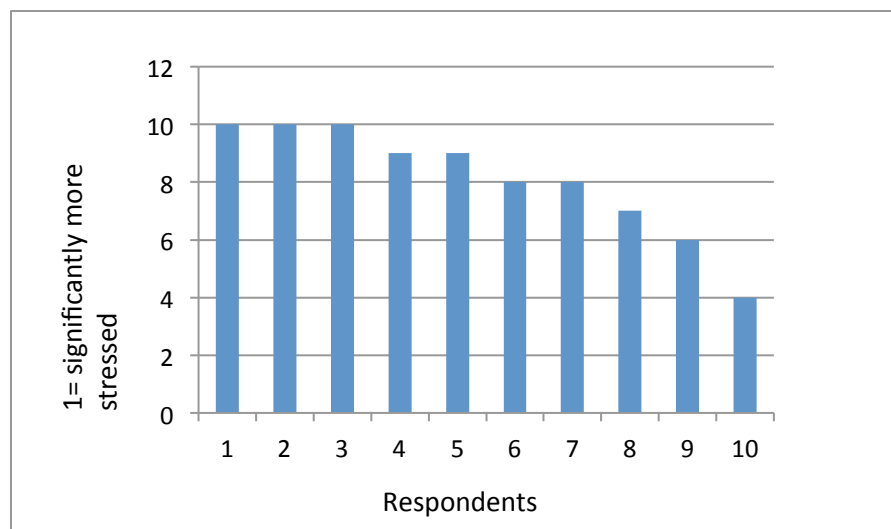
deduction of \$1000 /month. The last participant, who started gaining \$820/month, experienced a reduction of \$1100. Another participant experienced a transfer reduction of \$1000 /month but she did not get employment and the reduction was not due to her income so this amount will be ignored.

However, two of the participants experienced an increase in transfer payments after being involved with EE, potentially because they became more aware of what was available to them. For those who experienced an increase in government transfers, the total amount was \$ 5300. However, there was also a reduction in \$ 4423, so, in the aggregate, there was an increase of \$877 /month. This increase would be likely only transfer money that was available to the participants but they were not aware of their options.

In the first SROI survey form, the question regarding job readiness was vague for participants. In an effort to make it clearer, the survey designer created three different questions about the job readiness of the participants rather than one general question<sup>2</sup>. Although this approach was quite helpful, it caused some confusion. The new designed survey was only used for the cohort 2013 in both baseline and follow up questionnaires, while for the two cohorts in 2012, the old design was used in baseline questionnaires and the new design in the follow up survey. Therefore, comparing the results and finding out the difference between the baseline and final surveys in terms of job readiness was challenging. Due to this confusion and probable misinterpretation, this question from the survey will be ignored.

Unfortunately, the stress level question seems to have some challenges as well. The difference between the baseline and follow up surveys shows that 5 of 10 participants experienced an increase in stress, one is slightly less stress and 4 experienced no difference in stress. However, when they were asked about the impact of EE on stress levels, they claimed that being involved in EE helped to reduced stress. With respect to the question about whether EE helped to reduce stress, which was only asked during the follow up survey, 9 out of the 10 respondents claimed that EE reduced stress, while one stated being more stressed (see figure #4)

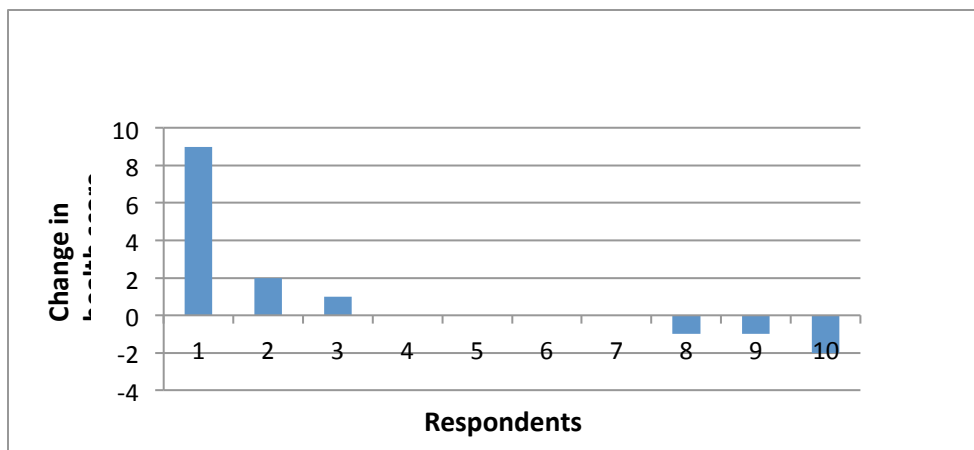
**Figure #4: Impact of EE on Stress Level**



<sup>2</sup> Instead of asking the participants to score their job readiness, they were asked to score their “job interview skills”, “access to job resources”, and “job application skills without assistance”.

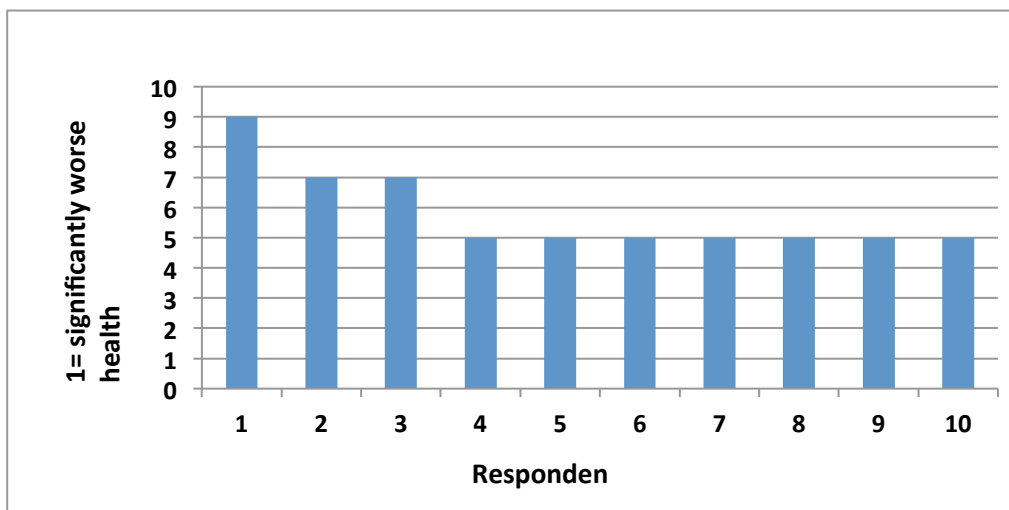
As for the health score, of the 10 respondents, four of them reported no change; three of them claimed a minor aggravate health and three of them reported an increase in health outcomes, ranging from minor improvement (increase of 1 pint) to significant improvements (increase of 9 pints) (see figure #5)

**Figure #5: Change in reported health from before to after involvement with EE**



With respect to the cited impact of EE in the participants' health, the results suggest that the participants either were neutral on the topic, or found that being involved with EE lead to stronger health outcomes. As depicted below, nine respondents were neutral (score as 5), two cited an increase (score of 7) and one cited a significant improvement (score of 9) (see figure #6)

**Figure #6: Impact of EE on Health**

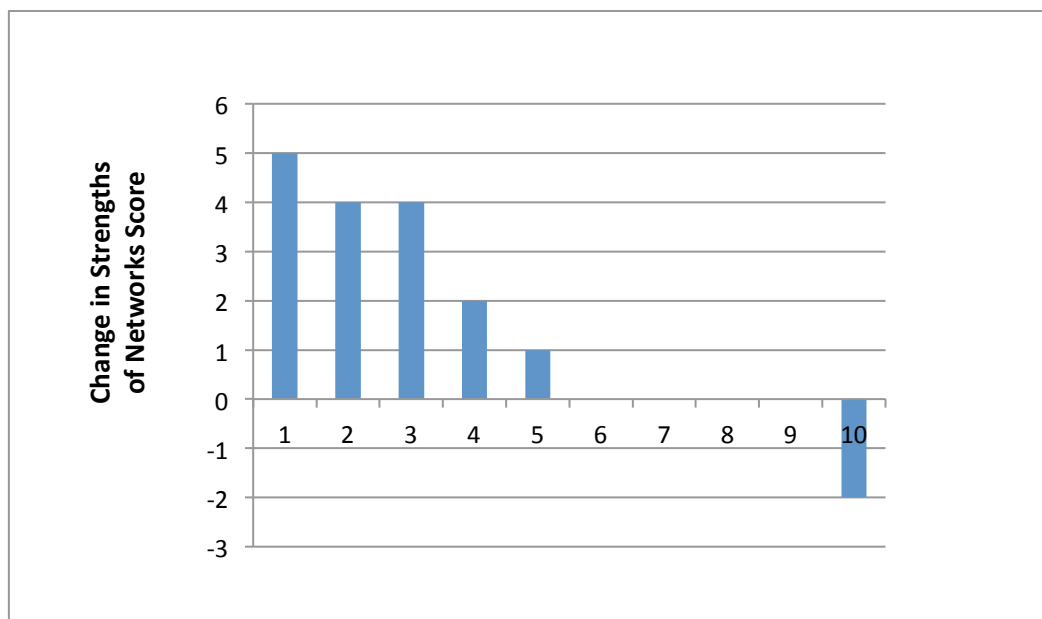


Regarding the times the program participants visited the doctor, of the six valid responses ( others did not respond to this question) two participants had six more visits, two participants had no more visits, one participants had one more visit and two participants had two less visits. In sum, the result indicates an overall eleven more visits.

With respect to the benefit of reducing the number of time program participants visits the Food Bank, nine participants from ten, experienced no change, while one participant cited using the Food Bank one more time per month. As a result, in sum, there was increase in the usage of Food Banks.

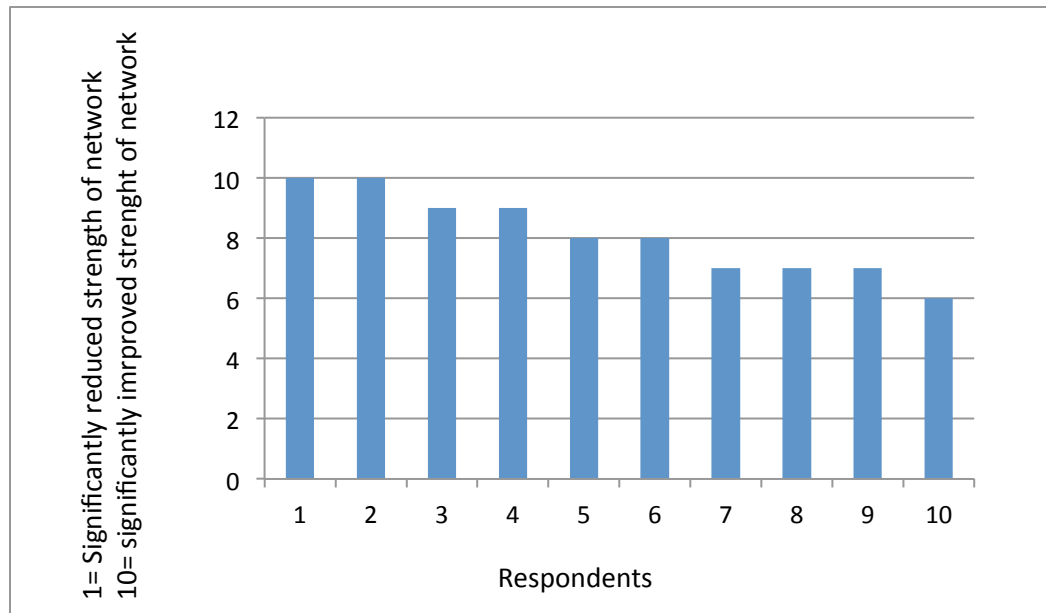
In regard to the strength of the participants' networks, four participants from ten reported no change, one participant cited an increase of 5points, one participant claimed an increase of two points, one participant reported an increase of 1point, and one participant reported a decrease of two points. Overall, the findings suggest that being involved in EE helped to increase the networks for the participants (See figure #9)

**Figure #7: Change in Strength of Network**



As for the impact of EE on participants' social support network, the graph below (see figure # 10) displays that the participants felt that EE helped them to build their social support network.

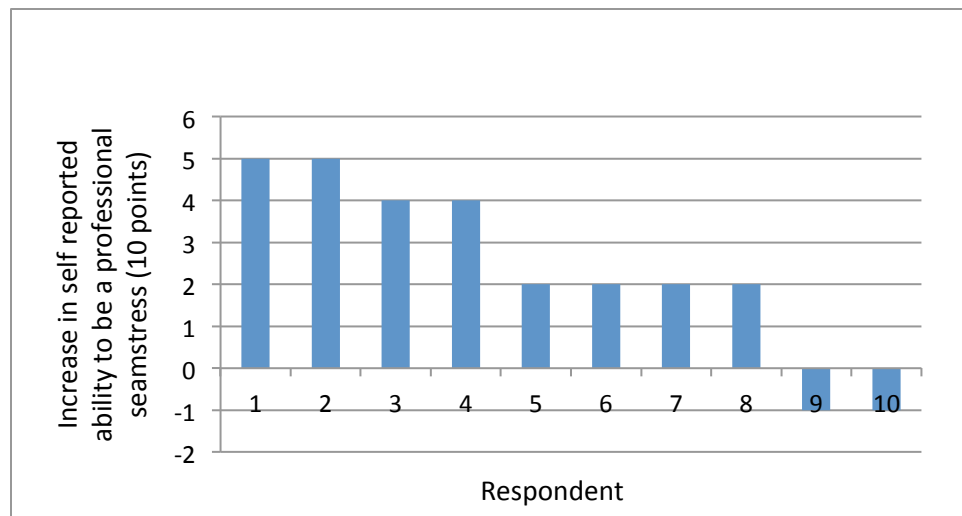
**Figure #8: Impact of EE on Strength of Networks**



In regard to the impact of EE on improving the sewing skills of the program participants, the results suggest that EE did improve the skills of the participants. When they were asked about the general knowledge of sewing, one respondent reported no change, one participant reported an improvement of 1 score, two respondents cited an improvement of 2 points, two respondents reported an improvement of 3 points, one participant cited an improvement of 4 points, one participant claimed an improvement of 5 points, one participant reported a positive change of 7 scores, and one respondent cited a negative change (one point). Given that it is highly unlikely that the participant sewing skill depreciated while involved in Sowing for Jobs program, it is assumed that the participant's understanding of general knowledge of sewing has changed.

As for being able to be a professional seamstress (see figure #9 below), four participants reported an improvement of two scores, two participants cited an improvement of four scores, two participants reported an improvement of five scores, and two participants cited a negative change of one score. Again, it is assumed that the participants' expectation of begin a professional seamstress have been changed given that it is highly unlikely that their sewing skills depreciated during the sewing training program.

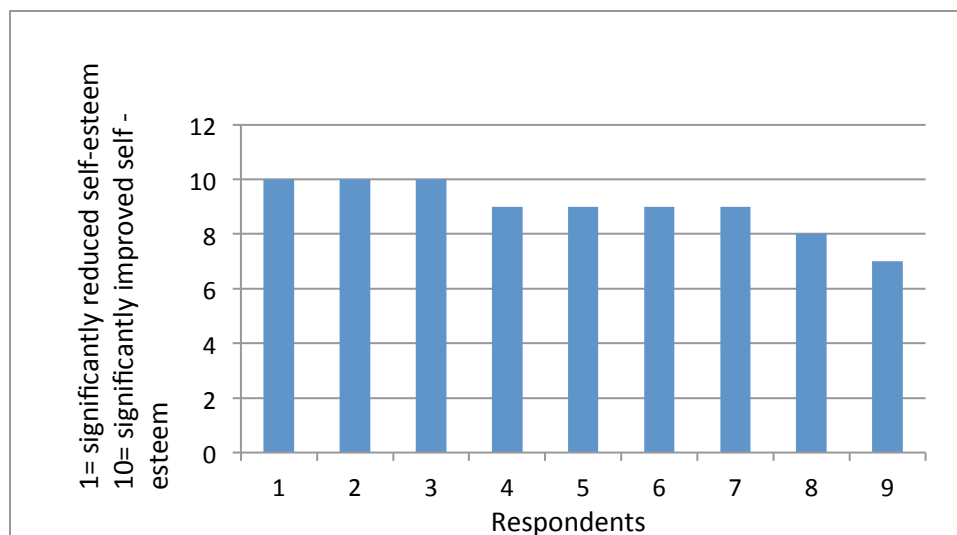
**Figure #9: Change in belief of having skills to be a professional seamstress**



As for the impact of Sowing for Jobs on the participants' self-esteem, they were asked four different questions. One was to score "I believe I can succeed at most of the tasks that I decide to do". One respondent claimed an improvement of 6 score, two participants reported a positive change of 4 score, one participant claimed an improvement of 2 score, two participants cited an improvement of one score, three participants reported no change, and one participant reported a negative change of 2 score.

However, when they were asked about the impact of EE on their self-esteem, all ten participants reported an impressive improvement (see Figure #10 below).

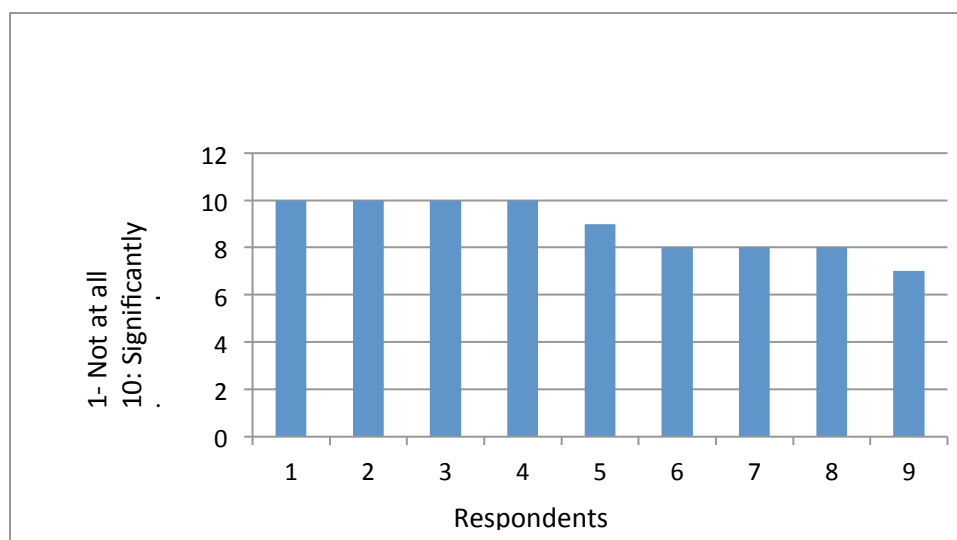
**Figure #10: Impact of EE on Self Esteem**



Finally, the last outcome of interest is in regard to the impact of EE on the participants' ability to set up their own workspace, such as having the necessary materials or knowing where to purchase the materials.

One of the participants did not respond to this question. The overall survey responses indicate an impressive improvement (see figure# 13):

**Figure #11: Impact of EE on Setting up Own Workspace**



While an effort was made to explain the impact of “Sowing for Jobs” program in quantitative terms, it is important to acknowledge that some of the key outcomes cannot be captured in quantifiable terms.

#### 5. Explanation of the SROI calculations

One of the reasons of conducting the SROI analysis is to compare the social benefit to the cost of the Sowing for Jobs program. The calculations for the benefits are drawn from the information regarding the financial proxies, the adjustments, and the outcomes of the Sowing for Jobs program for the participants.

As for the costs, this was drawn from the financial statement of EE and scaled down to isolate the costs for Sowing for Jobs for three cohorts starting from January 2012 to May 2013.

The calculation for the employment outcome is drawn directly from the figures regarding increases in employment income after being involved in Sowing for Jobs. However, there may have been other factors that includes this outcome, thus the overall impact is adjusted based on the responses of the participants to the effect that EE had on their employment opportunities.

From the results of the surveys, three participants found part-time employment and four participants found full-time employment.

For two participants, the employment lead to earning \$1500 / month (for each), so on a yearly basis, this equals \$16431 per year after tax. It was also cited that other factors did not have any role in job readiness improvement. In addition, other organizations contributed to the Sowing for Jobs program and the

adjustment for this is 13% per year. Yet, it is assumed that this benefit will last 3 years, and using the discount rate of 3.5%, the total benefit for both is \$25,784.92.

With respect to two other full-time employee participants, they did not do out the follow-up survey but they were both recommended to their employers through EE and hence, the Program Coordinator is aware of the number of hours the participants worked (i.e. 40 hours / week). Therefore, based on minimum wage (\$10.25 /hour), each participant earned \$19085 after tax. The calculation is as follow:

$$(40 \times 52 \text{ (weeks / year)} \times \$10.25) - \text{tax payable } (\$2235) = \$19085$$

They did not answer the question of other programs' impact on their job readiness and they was supported and recommend to their employers through EE so it is assumed no other program assisted them in receiving employment, yet the attribution adjustment is 13%. Given that this benefit will last for 3 years, and using a discount rate of 3.5%, the total benefit for both is \$29,951.62.

Another part-time employee participant earned \$400 / month as she cited in the survey. So on a yearly basis, this equals \$4800 without any tax payable. She also reported that no other factors had impact on her job readiness improvement, yet the attribution adjustment is 13%. Given that this benefit will last for 3 years and using a discount rate of 3.5%, the total benefit is \$3,766.5.

In regards to the other participant, the part-time employment leads to earning \$600 / month as she reported in the survey. So, on a yearly basis, this equals \$7200 without any tax payable. However, she reported that other factors, at a level of %100, improved job readiness. Therefore, no impact is attributed to EE.

The last participant who gained a part-time employment after completion of the program was hired by EE. She worked 20 hours / week and she was paid per work piece. Therefore, based on minimum wage (\$10.25/hour), she earned \$10563 after tax. She cited that no other factors had impact on her job readiness, yet the attribution adjustment is 13%. Given that this benefit will last for 3 years and using a discount rate of 3.5%, the total benefit is \$8,364.80.

In regards to increase in tax revenue, out of seven participants who gained employment, five participants paid taxes. Two of them paid \$1569 per year. They reported that other programs had no impact on their job readiness. With calculation of the attribution adjustment of 13% and the discount rate of 3.5% for three years (since the benefit will last for 3 years), the total benefit is \$ 2462.36.

Two other participants paid \$2235 per year. They also reported that other programs had no impact on their job readiness. With calculation of the attribution adjustment of 13% and the discount rate of 3.5%, the total benefit is \$ 3507, 56.

The last participant who got employed paid \$97 tax per year. She also reported no other program had no impact on her job readiness so the total impact is attributed to EE. With calculation of the attribution adjustment of 13% and the discount rate of 3.5%, the total benefit is \$76.11.

With respect to the reductions in government transfers, the financial proxy refers to whether the participants, through increases in income, became less reliant on transfers from the government, thereby

reducing the amount of transfer payments. Therefore, the focus of this section will be on those who found employment after involvement with EE.

From seven participants who found employment in the result of participating in Sowing for Jobs program at EE, five of them experienced transfer reduction. One of the participants reported \$300 transfer reduction, saving the government \$3600 per year, while she cited that other programs had no impact on her job readiness so the %100 of the impact was attributed to EE. On the other hand, as discussed before, the attribution adjustment is 13% given the contribution of other organizations in providing the services at Sowing for Jobs and because the impact is assumed to be 3 years, taking into account the discount rate, the overall impact is \$2,824.88

The other participant cited \$733 reductions in government transfer, saving the government \$8796 per year. She cited that other programs had no impact on her job readiness so %100 of the impact is attributed to EE. After attribution adjustment of 13% and the discount rate of 3.5% during the three years, the overall impact is \$6902.13.

Another participant experienced \$1000 transfer reduction, saving the government \$12000 per year. As cited, other programs had not impact on receiving employment. After calculating the attribution adjustment of 13% and discount rate of 3.5%, the total impact is \$9416.28.

The other participant reported \$1100 reduction in government transfer, saving \$13200 per year, and cited that other programs had no impact on her job readiness. Having considered the attribution adjustment and discount rate, the total benefit is \$10357.91

The last participant who reported \$1290 reduction in government transfer, saving \$15480 per year, did not cite if other programs had any impact on receiving employment. As discussed before, he was supported and recommended to his current employer directly from EE and therefore, it is assumed that other programs had not impact on gaining employment. Hence, after calculating the attribution adjustment and discount rate, the total impact is \$13467.60.

As for the monetized benefit for health, the financial proxy used for this outcome is the reduction in doctor visits. Some of the participants reported an increase in number of times of visiting doctors. However, it is highly unlikely that being involved with Sowing for Jobs would negatively have impact on the participants' health and so, they were not included in the analysis. As for the results, one of the participants cited seeing the doctor 2 less times after being involved in the Sowing for Jobs program. The value per visit was identified as \$ 47.08, which equals \$94.16 in saving per year. However, the individual reported that the impact of EE on health was neutral, which suggests that health improvement would be caused for other reasons. Therefore, the cost saving in this case is \$0.

Regarding to the Social Service cost savings, the financial proxy used is the cost of visiting a food bank. One participant cited an increase usage of Food Bank which is not included in assessment because it is highly unlikely that participating in Sowing for Jobs caused the participant to require more assistance from Food Banks. No one reported any decrease usage of Food Bank so the Social Service cost saving is \$0.

The final outcome that has a financial proxy attached to it is the revenue generated by the "Sowing for Jobs" participants. For this calculation, it was assumed that 5% of total revenue from repair/alterations in

2012 and January – May 2013 was a function of the “Sowing for Jobs” participants, which equals \$49.83. The deadweight adjustment is equal to 0% as none of the productions would have been created without the program, the attribution is equal to 13% as other organizations were involved in EE, and the drop off is 0% as there is no depreciation or drop off in this revenue stream. Given these adjustments as well as discount rate for one year, the total impact is \$41.89.

After performing all these calculations, the total impact of “Sowing for Jobs”, for three cohorts from January 2012 – May 2013, is determined as \$ 358,767.35.

In order to assess the benefit cost ratio, the cost of the program should be also considered. According to the finance sheet, the total costs for these three cohorts are \$78,182.00.

As a result of these calculations, the benefit cost ratio for “Sowing for Jobs” program for three cohorts is \$4.59:\$1.00

#### 6. Conclusion:

Many studies prove the need for assisting immigrant and newcomers who experience relatively poor economic outcomes. To address this issue, the “Sowing for Jobs” program target this demographic to develop their sewing skills, increase their employability and improve their social inclusion. This analysis was an effort to determine the impact of the program on labor market outcomes of the participants. However, it should be noted that due to the type of data collected, some of it could not be used for the SROI analysis. The impressive impact of the “Sowing for Jobs” program on self-confidence and social capital of the participants should be highlighted. The results of the survey indicate that this program hugely helped the participants improve their self-confidence, increase their social networks and feel more comfortable in their community.

Moreover, the first SROI ratio, conducted in 2011, was \$1.52:\$1.00 and the current SROI analysis determines the ratio as \$4.59:\$1.00. Comparing two SROI ratios suggests an increase of \$3.13 return on each dollar of investment. This increase in return is evidence to the considerable improvement of the Sowing for Jobs program from 2011 to 2013.