

Impact of Summer Temporary Employment Program Elimination in 2013

Executive Summary

Members of the InterCity Forum on Social Policy (ICFSP) were concerned about the elimination of the STEP and its impact on municipalities. ICFSP members decided to develop and distribute a survey to members and key contacts within their communities to gauge the scope of this impact.

Between March 27 and April 11, 2013 members of the ICFSP completed an on-line survey and distributed it to key organizations within their communities which might be impacted by the elimination of the STEP (Summer Temporary Employment Program) in 2013. The purpose of the survey was to gauge the impact of the decision to eliminate, and identify how organizations may address the impact. A total of 234 surveys were completed (27 municipal government and 207 not for profit organizations located in all sized of municipalities/counties and towns across Alberta)

Of the 234 participants, 222 survey respondents offered summer programs over the past three years. A total of 2051 programs were offered each year mostly by not for profit organizations. More than half (55%) represented Children's programs offered by not for profit organizations. Other program included fundraising, senior's programs, museum tours guides, park maintenance and arts/culture exhibitors.

In the past three years 228 of the 234 survey participants hired summer students as a result of the STEP program. On average 508 students were hired per year and 89, 088 people participated in programs offered each year.

Most survey participants subsidized the STEP funding (88%) as the Government of Alberta contributes \$7.00 per hour to the student's wage. The organization top up amount ranged from a few hundred to tens of thousands of dollars each year.

Well over half (56%) of the survey respondents reported that they will not maintain their service level for 2013. 30% will be able to maintain the same level of service and the balance were unsure.

About half (49%) will hire fewer students and 36% will not hire students at all in 2013. Among the different programs, free summer programs offered to targeted/vulnerable/low income groups show the greatest impact with seventy nine organizations deciding to offer fewer free summer programs. To mitigate the problem, these organizations plan to seek out other funding and increase the fee to participant in these programs.

As a result of the necessary program cuts, 104 of the 234 survey participants (44%) believe that fewer people in the targeted/vulnerable/low income group will have access to free summer programs. 58% believe fewer people overall will have access to regular summer program including playground programs and other types.

Survey participants who will maintain the same level of service will do so because they have already planned/committed to the community for the summer of 2013 and they will do their best to meet the financial impact. However, they are not prepared for subsequent years going forward and that it is likely that they will have to cut back on service levels.

Short term solutions suggested by survey participants included applying for other funding, reallocating funding from other programs, utilizing reserve funds, running the programs at a deficit or assigning more duties to current staff or hired students. Some suggested they would implement fundraising activities or increase fees to participate while others may seek out possible collaborations with other organizations.

In conclusion, STEP was a cost effective way for the province to make sure that thousands of Alberta's post-secondary students received meaningful job experience in their field of study. Through the STEP, not-for-profit organizations, in partnership with the province, were able to offer summer programming to over 89,088 people in communities across Alberta each year, over a three year period. Not only will the elimination of the STEP impact post-secondary students and the voluntary sector, it will also impact members of the general community, as well as targeted/vulnerable/low income children and families who access free or low cost summer programs.

Inter-City Forum on Social Policy - Survey Report

Impacts of Summer Temporary Employment Program (STEP) Elimination 2013

June 17, 2013

Background

1. Objective

The purpose of this survey is to gather information about the impacts of the decision to eliminate the STEP (Student Temporary Employment Program) and how organizations may be addressing these impacts in 2013.

2. Methodology

The survey was posted online from March 27th to April 11th, 2013. Members of ICFSP (Inter City Forum on Social Policy) were asked to complete the survey and distribute it to key organizations in their communities that might be impacted by the loss of STEP. A total of 234 surveys were completed.

The City of Edmonton developed the questionnaire, with the support from the Edmonton Social Planning Council. The survey gathers feedbacks regarding the following 3 aspects,

- Previous programs supported by STEP
- Impacts from the elimination of STEP
- How might the impacts be addressed for the summer of 2013

3. Survey Participants (survey questions 1 and 2)

Out of the 234 organizations, 27 were municipal governments. The rest are various not-for-profit organizations. These organizations are located in all sizes of municipalities/counties/towns across the province. 188 are from the city of Red Deer and north, and 44 are from south of Red Deer.

Table 1: Respondent Profile

	Municipal Government	Not-for-profit Organization	<u>Total</u>
Red Deer and North	19	169	<u>188</u>
South	8	36	<u>44</u>
NA		2	<u>2</u>
<u>Total</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>207</u>	<u>234</u>

4. Consideration

This survey did not implement a systematic sampling method; neither is it a census survey. It was completed by those who chose to do so. Thus conclusions can't be drawn to represent all of the organizations that received STEP in the past.

Previous programs supported by STEP- 3 year's average

1. Program Offered (survey question 4)

- 222 out of the 234 participating organizations offered summer programs in the past three years.
- A total of 2051 programs were offered each year by the 222 organizations, most (1949) of them were offered by the not-for-profit organizations.
- Among the different types of programs, more than half (1121) represented Children's programs offered by the not-for-profit organizations.

Table 2: Average # of Programs Offered per year

Type of Program	Municipal Government	Not-for-profit Organization	<u>Total</u>
Playground	6	150	<u>156</u>
Children's (None Playground)	60	1121	<u>1181</u>
Youth	12	307	<u>319</u>
Adult	1	145	<u>146</u>
Community Projects	21	166	<u>187</u>
Research Projects	2	60	<u>62</u>
<u>Total</u>	<u>102</u>	<u>1949</u>	<u>2051</u>

- Besides the programs shown in Table 2, more than 30 organizations offered various other programs, including fund raising, senior’s programs, museum tour guide, park maintenance, and arts/cultural exhibitions etc.

2. Students Hired and Participants (survey questions 3 and 5)

In the past three years, most of the participating organizations (228 out of 234) hired summer students as a result of the STEP funding. On average a total of 508 students have been hired and 89,088 people participated in the programs offered each year in the past three years, as a result of STEP.

Table 3: Average # of Students Hired and Program Participants per year

	Municipal Government	Not-for-profit Organization	<u>Total</u>
# Students Hired	129	379	<u>508</u>
# Participants	2,410	86,678	<u>89,088</u>

3. Additional Funding (survey questions 6 and 7)

Out of the 234 participating organizations, most of them (206) subsidized the STEP funding to carry out the program in the past three years. The top up amount ranged from a few hundred to tens of thousands dollars each year.

Impacts from the ending of STEP

1. Overall Service Level

When being asked if they are going to maintain the same service level for the summer of 2013, less than a third (30%) of the 234 organizations reported that they will maintain their service level. More than half (56%) will not be able to maintain the same service level.

Table 4: # of Organizations Plan to Maintain/Not Maintain the Same Service Level

	Municipal Government	Not-for-profit Organizations	<u>Total</u>	Percentage
Yes	11	59	<u>70</u>	30%
Trying/Planning	3	19	<u>22</u>	9%
No	10	122	<u>132</u>	56%
Total	24	200	<u>224</u>	96%

2. Impact on the ORGANIZATION (survey questions 8)

Among the 234 participating organizations, although 1/3 are planning to maintain the same level of service in 2013, 229 reported that the ending of the STEP will have some impacts on their organizations.

- About half of the 234 organizations (49%) will hire less summer students, but a third (36%) will not hire students because of the ending of the STEP.
- Among the different programs, “FREE” summer programs offered to targeted/vulnerable/low income groups shows the most impact. Seventy-nine (79) organizations reported they will have to offer less free summer programs for this group.
- Other types of organizational impacts reported include organizations being forced to seek other funding and having to increase the price to participate in the programs, etc.

Table 5: # of organizations reported impacts on organization

	Municipal Government	Not for profit Organizations	Total	Percentage
Student Hiring				
Not hire any summer students	2	82	84	36%
Hire less summer students	13	101	114	49%
Programs - General Population				
Less summer PLAYGROUND programs	4	53	57	24%
Less summer programs (not including PLAYGROUND)	6	52	58	25%
Programs- Targeted/ Vulnerable/Low Income Groups				
Less FREE summer programs	6	73	79	34%
Less LOW COST summer programs	8	49	57	24%
We will not complete a community project	7	47	54	23%

3. Impact on the PEOPLE (survey question 9)

As a result of the necessary program cut that organizations have been considering, 104 out of the 234 participating organizations (44%) believe that less people from the vulnerable/targeted/low income groups will have access to FREE summer programs. Higher percentages (58%) of the organizations believe less people will have access to regular summer programs (including playground programs and other types). Some of the organizations cited that affordability is another impact due to possible increase in program fees.

How impacts might be addressed (survey questions 10, 11, and 12)

Most of the organizations that are planning to maintain the same level of services (70, see table 4) will do so because they've already planned/committed to the community for the summer of 2013 and they will do their best to meet the financial challenge for this year. However they are not prepared for the year after and they mentioned that it's very possible that they'll have to cut back the

service level if additional funding cannot be secured. The short term solutions these organizations are planning to take include but are not limited to, the following options:

- Apply for other funding, including different orders of government, local business, charity organizations, etc.
- Internal budget reallocation
 - Reallocating funding for other programs throughout the year
 - The use of other budgets, i.e. community league budget, operating expenses, staffing budget, etc.
 - The use of reserve funding
 - Running the program at a deficit
 - Assign more duties to current staff or hired students
- Pulling monetary resources from the community
 - Fundraising
 - Increase fees charged for the programs
 - Rely on volunteers
 - Partner with other agencies

On the other side, most (75%) of the 132 organizations that are not able to maintain the same level of service (see table 4) have no alternative plans to meet the needs of the citizens/communities/residents their organizations serve, other than simply end or reduce the program offerings depending on existing resources. Others are planning to seek out possible collaborations with other organizations or look for other funding so the service can still be maintained at a similar level as in the past. Some examples of the answers from this group when they were asked if they have any alternative plans to meet community needs include,

- “No - our organization does not have the capacity to continue delivering these services without the STEP grant...” --Anonymous
- “No other plans. Our organization is already limited in financial resources and does not have sufficient funding to compensate for the loss of STEP funding...” –Anonymous
- “Although we already partner with many organizations in the community to offer programming, we will reach out to more in the hopes of maintaining some programs. We are also considering charging (which we have not done in the past) for programs but doing so on a sliding fee so that

those who can afford more will pay more. We already receive funding from businesses and feel that this avenue is tapped out - we are a small rural remote community so do not have access to big corporations like cities do and our small independently owned businesses get "hit" by everyone in the community for donations/sponsorships..."

--Anonymous

APPENDIX I- SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION I - BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Type of organization:

- Municipal Government
- Not-For-Profit
- Other, please specify _____

2. Which municipality in Alberta is your organization located in?

Name of the municipality _____

3. In the past 3 years, what was the average number of students you hired each year as a result of the STEP?

students hired per year _____

4. In the past 3 years, what was the average number of the following types of programs or projects offered each year as a result of the STEP ?

children's programs per year _____

playground programs per year _____

youth programs per year _____

adult programs per year _____

community projects per year _____

research projects per year _____

Other, please specify _____

5. In the past 3 years, what was the average number of participants of programs offered each year as result of STEP?

participants per year _____

SECTION II - IMPACTS FROM THE STEP CUT

6. Did you "top up" STEP funding to carry out your program in the past? (i.e. to increase wage, for program expenses)?

- Yes
- No
- Other, please specify

7. If you answered YES to question 6, on average how much did you contribute (top up) annually?

Amount of top up annually _____

8. Think about the impact on YOUR ORGANIZATION, which of the following statements is/are true ? (Please select ALL that apply)

- We will hire less summer students
- We will not hire any summer students
- We will offer less FREE summer programs for targeted/vulnerable/low income groups
- We will offer less LOW COST summer programs for targeted/vulnerable/low income groups
- We will offer fewer summer PLAYGROUND programs
- We will offer fewer summer programs (not including PLAYGROUND programs)
- We will not complete a community project
- Other, please specify _____

9. Think about the impact on the PEOPLE your organization serves, which of the following statements is/are true? (Please select ALL that apply)

- Less people from the vulnerable/targeted/low income groups will have access to FREE summer programs.

- Less people will have summer programs (including playground programs and other types)
- Other, please specify _____

SECTION III - PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

10. In light of this recent STEP cut, does your organization plan to maintain the same level of service for summer programs in 2013?

- Yes
- No
- Other, please specify _____

11. If you answered YES to Question 10, how are you going to make it happen?

12. If you answered NO to Question 10, do you have any alternative plans to meet the needs of the citizens/communities/residents your organization serves?
