

Equipment and Assistive Technology initiative (EATI) - Highlights from the University of BC Independent Evaluation and the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skill Training Survey

Equipment and assistive technology, and related services such as assessment, repair and training, are provided to support eligible persons with disabilities to attain their employment goals. Funded by the Federal Labour Market Agreement from 2009 – 2014, the EATI provided an opportunity for a unique partnership between government and community to meet on common ground to try a different approach to delivering assistive technology to people with disabilities. Service delivery, based on the Participation Model for Personal Supports, put the individual at the centre of service delivery, making him/her an active/driving partner in the process.

EATI participants agreed that the assistive technology that they received is having a positive impact and helping them towards employment

High satisfaction responses are consistent with research that indicates that the more consumers feel informed and involved in decision making about their assistive technology the more satisfied they feel and the lower the rate of abandonment

Highlights from the University of BC Independent Evaluation:

A team of researchers from the University of British Columbia evaluated EATI using three major research questions.¹ They gathered data through an online survey, interviews with EATI participants and interviews with key informants².

1. What impact does the equipment and assistive technology provided through EATI have on the lives of people with disabilities?

- 93.3% of 119 respondents agreed that the assistive technology helped them move towards employment

- 80% of 88 respondents strongly agreed or agreed the assistive technology has or will help them to get a job

2. What effect does using the Participation Model have?

- Over 90% of 169 respondents were satisfied with the assistive technology that they received
- Nearly 95% of 188 respondents reported that the ‘most useful’ technology they received was right for their needs
- Overall, over 90% of the EATI respondents reported that they still continued to use the assistive technology they received through EATI

3. What impact does joint community/government partnership have on the adaptability, flexibility, effectiveness and efficiency of EATI?

- Joint decision making (community and government) has enabled EATI to adapt to participant needs, to be flexible in the provision of funding and to be effective in supporting participants in their movement towards obtaining employment

“The philosophy of the Participation Model gives EATI its solid foundation”

¹ Jongbloed Lyn, Stainton Tim, Drynan Donna and Johnston, Patricia, *Equipment and Assistive Technology Initiative (EATI) Evaluation*, University of British Columbia Department of Occupational Sciences and Occupational Therapy and the School of Social Work, October 2013.

² Of 1,519 eligible participants, 390 responded to the survey. Of these, 289 completed surveys (74%), Respondents did not respond to every question, and response rates varied from question to question. “Not applicable” responses were not factored into percentages reported.

- The principles and values of the Participation Model continue to drive the program

Highlights from the Labour Market Agreement Outcome (LMA)

Survey:

Data from EATI participants who responded to exit surveys undertaken by the provincial Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training from 2010 to 2013 provides a snap shot of separate cohorts of EATI participants. It is not progressive data that follows participants over time to measure the nature of their labour market participation journey but instead looks at their experience within 3 months and 12 months after receiving assistive technology through EATI.³

2009 BC Stats analysis revealed, the labour force participation of people with disabilities is significantly less than that for people without disabilities and the gap widens with age and with the severity of the disability.

1. Increased labour market participation, particularly among under-represented target groups:

- Overall increase in the number of EATI participants who are participating in the labour force and a decline in the number of respondents who are not in the labour force
- Percentage of participants who become employed, including self employment has remained relatively constant over 3 years
 - 2010/2011** - 28 respondents out of 116 (26%)
 - 2011/2012** - 48 respondents out of 199 (24%)
 - 2012/2013*⁴ - 57 respondents out of 238 (26%)

2. Enhanced skill development opportunities for Canadians:

- Approximately a quarter (24% - 28% annually) of participants to the LMA survey pursue further education or training after EATI

I was hired by Home Hardware because of the assistive technology I received through EATI. A computer and an iPad along with specialized software that provided word prediction, scheduling and reminders, text to speech and scan and read software allowed me to apply for jobs and communicate with potential employers. Having equipment that increased my independence had a huge impact on my confidence and ability to work. My goal was to find employment working in a warehouse or retail environment and I did it! Gordon

The quality of my life and my ability to participate in volunteer positions and to create income earning opportunities has been aided by the EATI program. The power wheelchair and iPad, funded through EATI, make it possible for me to do all kinds of things which would otherwise be impossible. I have been able to earn small amounts of money through a little contract work and am making every effort to increase those opportunities. The EATI staff helped me believe in my own ability and, therefore, has also improved my chances of finding and creating work. Participating in the EATI program has increased the potential of my becoming a more productive member of society. Maureen

³ All data is based on relatively small sample sizes: 2010/2011 - 116 out of eligible 204 cohort (57% response rate); 2011/2012 - 199 out of eligible 368 cohort (54% response rate); 2012/2013 - 238 out of eligible 397 cohort (60% response rate). The 2009/10 data is limited and not included as it was start up year for EATI.

⁴ ** 12 month survey *3 month survey