

The Impacts of Peer Employment for People Experiencing Homelessness in Rural and Remote Communities



PRESENTERS :
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Who Are We?



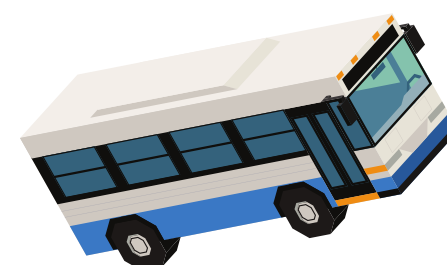
What does your work mean to you?

Work is important.

What does the research tell us?

- People who are unhoused want to work.
- Many of the work opportunities available for un-housed folks are precarious, unreliable and high-risk.
- Barriers to employment include a lack of vocational skills/training, mental/physical health challenges (and lack of needed accommodation), institutional barriers and discrimination.
- Employment programs are successful when they encourage collaboration between employers/community partners and provide an individualized (customized) approach.

Nelson BC: Population 11,106



Distance = 68.8km
90 minutes on public transit



Trail BC: Population 7,709



PEERS: Pathways to Engagement and Employment Readiness

PEER employment placements

Employment counselling and skill development

Wrap-around supports

Customized service delivery

Flexible financial supports

What worked?

- Strong community partnerships
- Flexible employment opportunities
- Long-term support and relationship focus
- Non-punitive approach
- Customization

“PEERs program has been positive with rebuilding confidence, extra working and keeping busy helps the most.”

– PEERs Participant



What jobs are best suited to Peer Employment?

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"Gave me a reason to get over my past via an outlet to help others. I literally found a reason to live"

– PEERS Participant

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“It’s helped me get out of my slump, helped me get back working with people again. It’s brought hope back into my head, and structure and learning things that I find helpful.”

– PEERS Participant

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“I went from being homeless to having a place to live. (I) have gotten full time sustainable employment and lessened the stresses of not having enough income. I do not have to struggle with juggling debt and can now relax and enjoy the day to day living. It has changed (my) life dramatically. When I first came to town I was very depressed. Now when I smile it is a real smile. The program has helped my perception of life and made me a happier person. I don't feel lost anymore.”

– PEERS Participant

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Challenges

Stigma
Community attitudes
Rural location
Metrics of success
Impact on staff
Toxic drug supply

Lessons Learned

- Prioritize trust-building through actions and systems
- Build service delivery in a way that is consistent and non-punitive
- Embed service delivery in locations that makes sense
- Offer flexible financial supports
- Ensure that services are long-term and relationship-focused
- Prioritize community partnerships for placements
- Dream big
- Employ creative service-delivery models





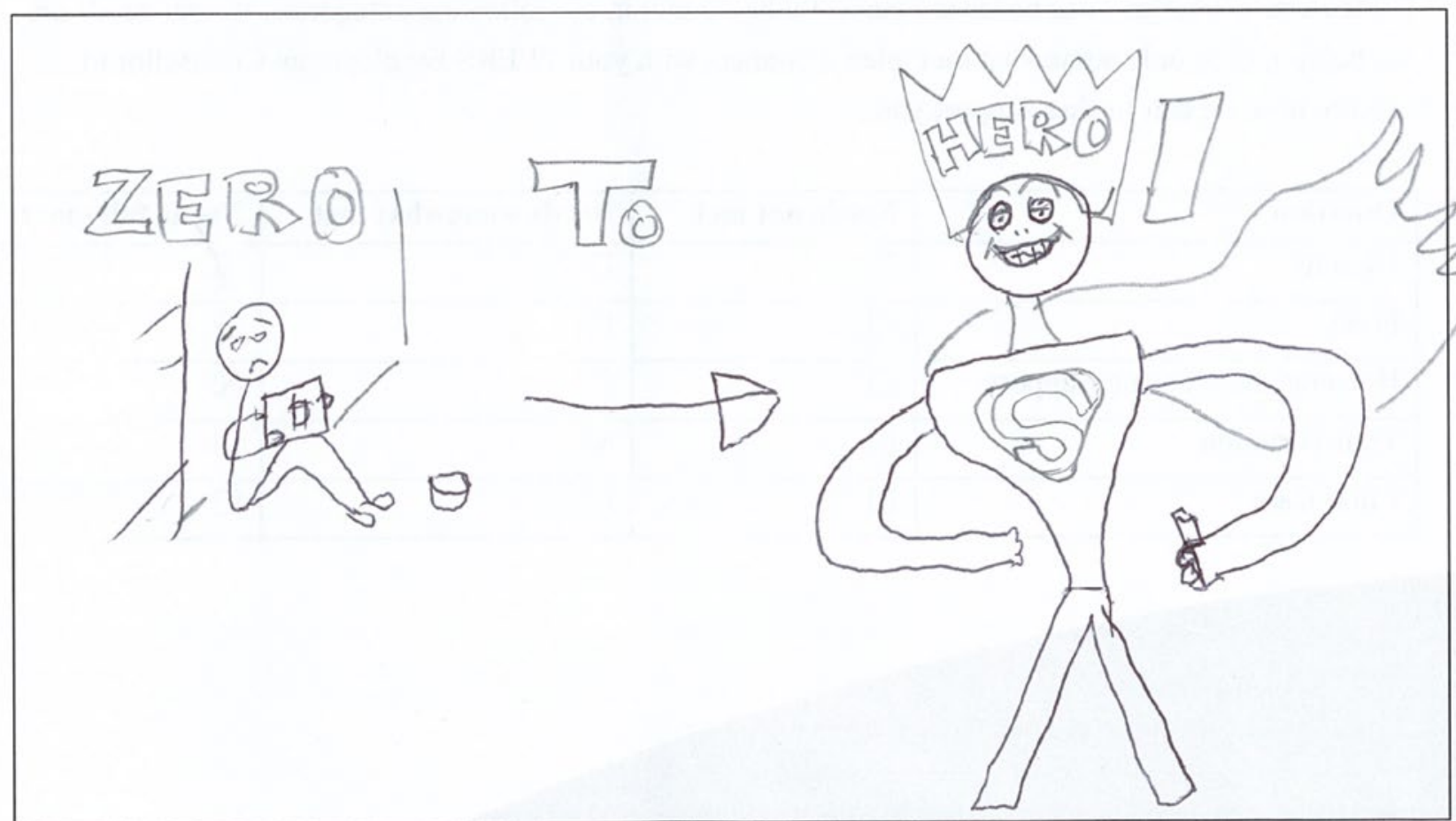
Program Blueprint

- Approach your local Employment Services Centre
- Build a program model based on customized peer employment with fair remuneration
- Ensure flexible financial supports
- Build strong partnerships with employers
- Emphasize research and curiosity with regards to success

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All the people from my placements, in the program with me, without even trying the connections I made had a big impact on my life. One of my work placements ended up opening a new low-income housing unit, and they let me in there from my work and from knowing me at Our Daily Bread. I was sleeping in a tent and waking up at 6am, with cars driving by constantly. Now that I'm staying in comfy bed, in a house, I don't really want to go camping for a long, long time. **The view from my place, you can see the spot on the highway where I used to tent.**

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GET IN TOUCH



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