

Evaluation of the YG Grad Corps Program

Findings Synthesis

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Evaluation of the YG Grad Corps Program

Introduction

The Grad Corps Program is one of two equity hiring programs currently delivered by the Yukon Government. This report presents the findings of an evaluation of Grad Corps Program operations from its inception in 2005/06 to 2010/11. The evaluation is focused on the question of whether the Grad Corps Program is achieving its intended outcomes in an effective and efficient manner.

The intended short-term (ST) outcomes of the Grad Corps Program are:

- Interns acquire skills and experience in line with their learning and development plans; and,
- Interns are successful in competing for Yukon public service positions.

The intended long-term (LT) intended outcomes of the Grad Corps Program are:

- Interns remain with and progress in the Yukon public service and experience improved career paths; and,
- Departmental recruitment goals are facilitated and the Yukon public service is strengthened.

The Grad Corps Program was evaluated using multiple lines of evidence to assess whether it is achieving its intended outcomes in an effective and efficient manner. The lines of evidence included:

- an administrative file review;
- development of a logic model for the program;
- a review of financial data for the program;
- design and implementation of a web survey for program participants (15 completed surveys); and,
- four key informant interviews.

This report presents a synthesis of the findings from the lines of evidence and presents recommendations for improved delivery of the program. The table below outlines the structure of the findings synthesis which follows:

	ST Outcomes	LT Outcomes
Effectiveness	Finding A	Finding B
Efficiency	Finding C	

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Program Genesis and Description

The Grad Corps Program is designed to help “bridge” recent Yukon post-secondary graduates into the Yukon public service by providing them with one-year contract opportunities. Yukon residents of all ages who have received a degree or diploma from a recognized post-secondary institution within the last two years and who have little or no work experience in their field of study are eligible to apply. Yukon students living outside the Yukon may apply within a period of up to two years after completing their studies. Interns receive a salary equivalent to 80% of the entry level salary for the position. Internship opportunities do not come with a guarantee of employment at the conclusion of a Grad Corps placement.

The table to the right presents program participation data supplied by Corporate Human Resources Staffing for the period 2005/06 to 2010/11 (as of November 3, 2011). As can be seen from the table, there have been a total of 42 Grad Corps placements over that period, with an average of seven participants in each year. As the Grad Corps internships are one year in length, the program has generated approximately 42 person years of employment.

Grad Corps Program Participation 2005/06 to 2010/11

Year	Number of Interns Awarded
2005/06	8
2006/07	6
2007/08	8
2008/09	3
2009/10	6
2010/11	6
Total	42

Source: Yukon Public Service Commission.

Grad Corps Participation by Department

	Number of Interns Awarded
Community Services	3
Economic Development	3
Executive Council Office	1
Energy, Mines and Resources	11
Environment	6
Highways and Public Works	3
Health and Social Services	9
Justice	1
Public Service Commission	3
YWCHSB	2
Total	42

Source: Yukon Public Service Commission.

As shown in the table to the left, program uptake has been greatest by the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources which hosted 11 interns during the review period. Health and Social Services had the next highest intake (nine interns) followed by Environment (six interns). Departments not shown did not participate in the program during the review period.

According to the Corporate Human Resources Staffing data, 19 of the 42 program participants are currently employed by the Yukon Government, equivalent to 45% of program participants. A further 10 individuals (24% of all participants) were offered a position with the Yukon Government but their term or casual positions have since ended. A total of 13 individuals, representing 31% of all program participants were not offered a position at the end of their Grad Corps placement. Counted among the 13 individuals are those who did not complete their one-year placement with the Yukon Government.

Employment Status of Grad Corps Participants

	Total	%
Current YG Employee	19	45
YG Position Ended	10	24
No Offer Made	13	31
Total	42	100

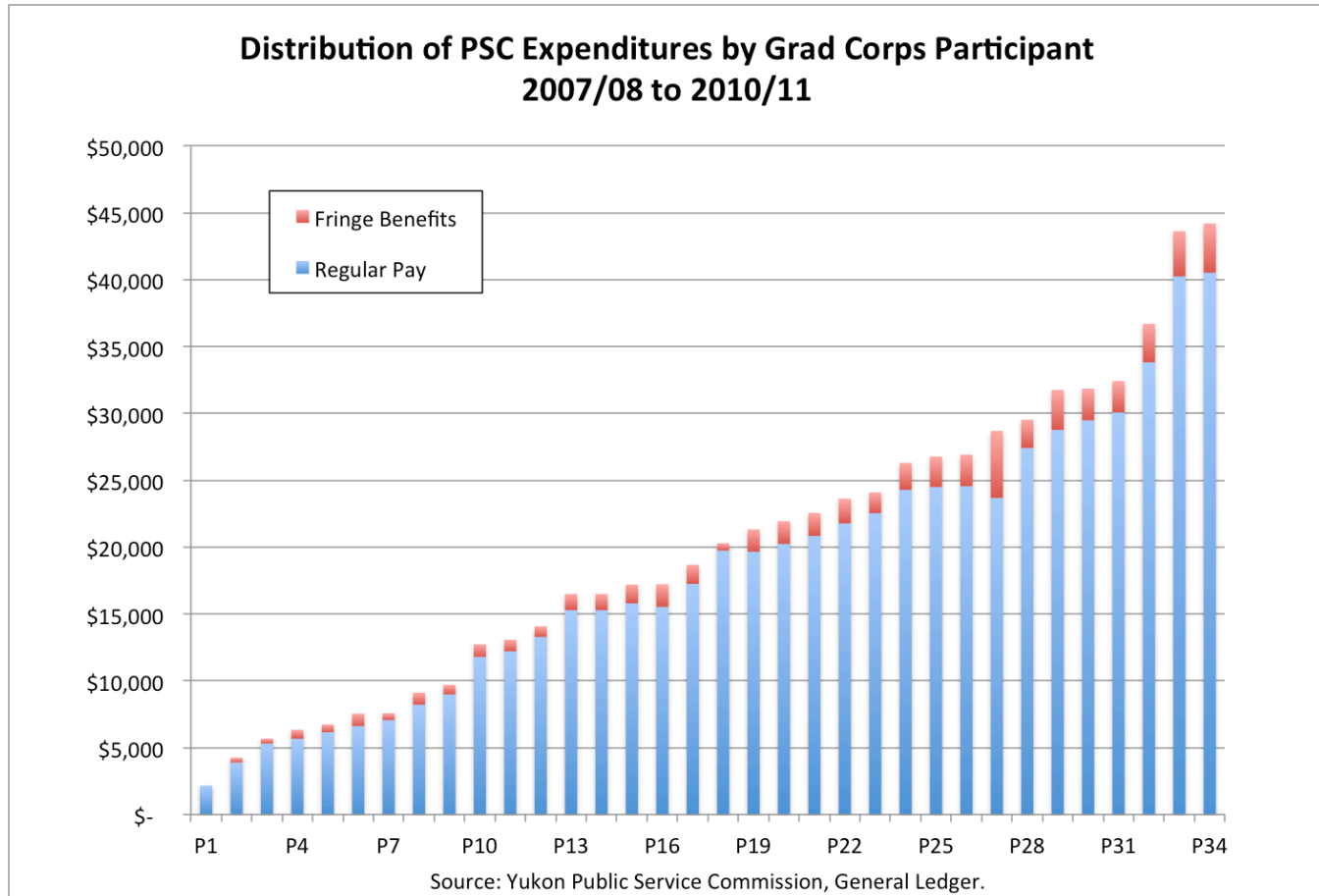
Source: Yukon Public Service Commission.

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Grad Corps Program funding is shared between the Public Service Commission and participating line departments. The chart to the right illustrates the distribution of expenditures made by the Public Service Commission to all 34 Grad Corps participants during the period 2007/08 to 2010/11 (expenditure data prior to 2007/08 were not available). Note that the expenditure amounts do not represent the full amount paid to individual program participants as expenditures made by line departments are not included.

On the chart, the notation P1 refers to participant one, P2 refers to participant two, etc. The lowest recorded participant

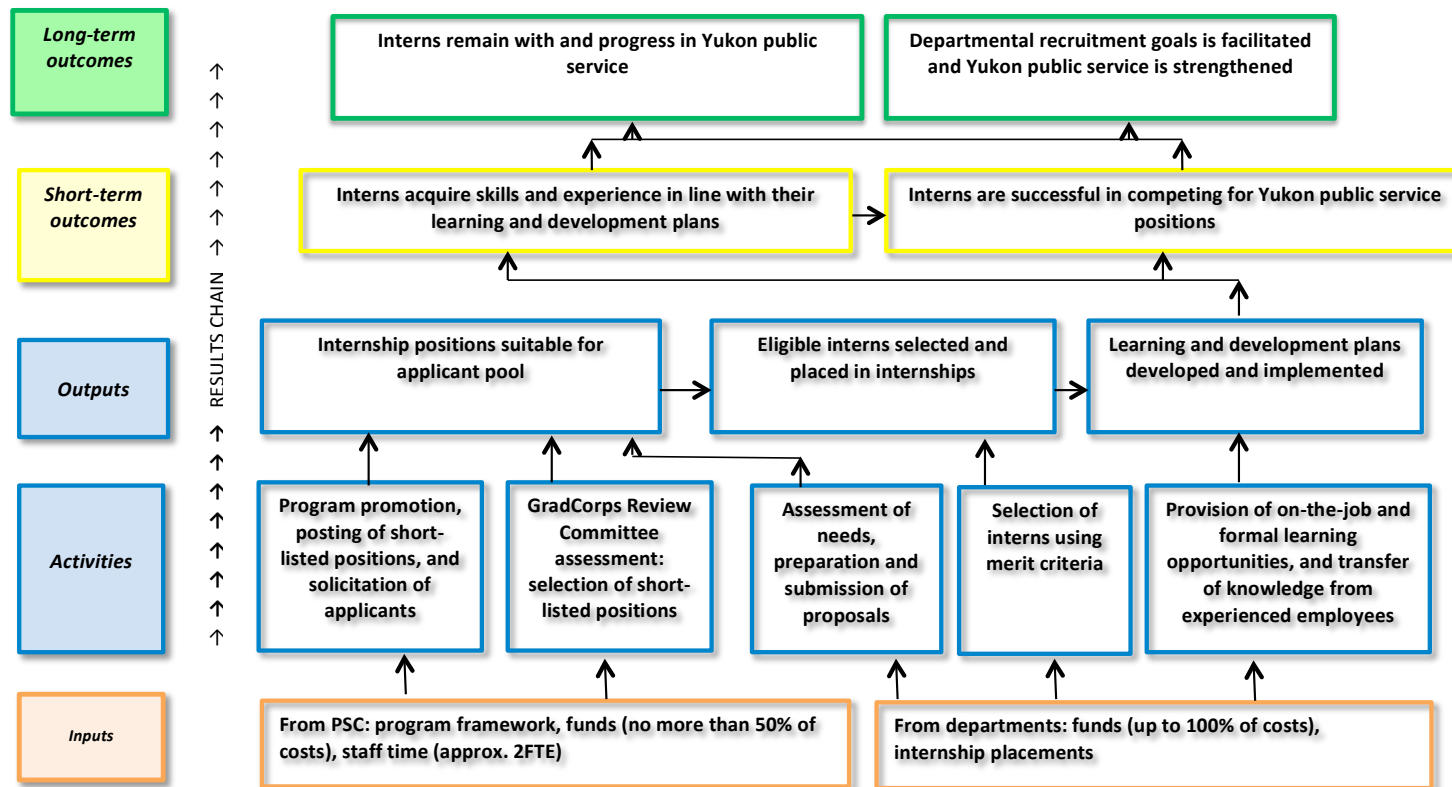
expenditure was \$2,157 and the highest was \$44,209 (comprised of \$40,526 in regular pay and \$3,683 in fringe benefits). Public Service Commission expenditures for regular pay and fringe benefits totaled \$677,600 over the period 2007/08 to 2010/11 and averaged \$19,930 per participant.



The chart on the following page presents the logic model for the Grad Corps Program.

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Yukon PSC GradCorps program – Logic Model (15.02.12)



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Short-term Outcome Achievement

Effectiveness: the extent to which a program is achieving expected outcomes.

(Source: Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat. *Policy on Evaluation*.)

A total of 15 web surveys were completed by Grad Corps participants. As almost all of the completed surveys were associated with Yukon Government email addresses, the responses should be considered to be generally reflective of the experiences of successful program participants. A total of three respondents indicated that they are currently participating in the program and 12 respondents indicated that they have completed their grad corps placements.

Approximately half (47%) of participant survey respondents indicated they had returned to the Yukon because they were accepted into the Grad Corps Program. Almost all survey respondents indicated that the work experiences made available to them were “perfectly in line” (33%) or “mostly in line” (53%) with their expectations for their Grad Corps placement. All survey respondents indicated that they either “strongly agreed” (58%) or “agreed” (42%) that “my career has progressed more quickly because of my participation in the Grad Corps Program”.

When asked what the Yukon Government could have done differently to ensure a better match between the expectations of Grad Corps participants and actual work experiences, a common theme among web survey participants related to the level of engagement of interns’ supervisors:

Better supervision and better support for the new and young employees.

The most important part of the Grad Corps Program is who is going to supervise/mentor you. If that person is not able to spend the required amount of time or dedicate the necessary resources then your experiences will be unfocused and lacking.

I was fortunate enough to have a supervisor that was very interested in ensuring that I got what I wanted out of the program. Within the first 2 weeks of my placement, we sat down together and went over exactly what I wanted out of the program, the type of projects I wanted to tackle, the learning I wanted to do, the training I was interested in taking, etc. With that, my supervisor and I had a good sense of how we could achieve those goals together. I felt that my supervisors and co-workers helped me acquire the knowledge that was needed for the tasks that were required of me. With time, the tasks increased as my knowledge of processes or procedures grew.

On the basis of responses by web survey participants, the Grads Corps Program is quite clearly helping program participants bridge the gap between school career and work career:

There aren't a lot of opportunities in my field as it can be difficult to get funding for [my type of] work. I don't know a single other classmate from University who went directly from their degree program into the exact field of interest they had, and therefore had first hand experience to use to apply for a regular government position. If it would not

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have been for this program, I probably would have worked elsewhere for a few more years before returning to the Yukon, but the opportunity was invaluable so I could not pass it up.

Yes, Grad Corps most definitely bridged that gap for me. I had over 6 years of non-government work experience prior to my master's degree but that was no help in securing YG employment. GC helped me to "get my foot in the door" of government. I still work for YG 7 years later, now in a management position.

Yes, I do believe that Grad Corps provided a bridge between school and my career. I was able to start a job directly from my studies. I gained the experience that I needed to secure a full time job in my in the field as well as in the Yukon.

The key informants interviewed as part of the evaluation generally viewed the Grad Corps Program as an effective way for program participants to bridge between school and employment with the Yukon Government. One key informant noted, however, that if the focus of the regular hiring process was changed to recognize the *potential* value of recent graduates, a program like Grad Corps would not actually be needed.

Finding A:

The YG Grad Corps Program is effectively achieving the first of its two intended outcomes, the acquisition of skills and experience in line with their learning and development plans.

With almost half (45%) of program participants continuing to work with the Yukon Government after completing their Grad Corps placements, and an additional 24% of program participants continuing on with YG for an additional period of time, the program is clearly achieving its short-term objective of helping interns succeed in competing for Yukon public service positions.

Long-term Outcome Achievement

As noted earlier, the retention rate for Grad Corps participants over the 2005/06 to 2010/11 review period was 45%. Several web survey respondents noted that the Grad Corps Program has been integral to their continued success within the Yukon public service:

I found a job working with the department that I did my placement with. Without the Grad Corps experience I do not feel that I would have been hired for this job.

It has been almost one year since my Grad Corps placement ended. I spent most of that time in an assignment with another Branch. Just last month, I successfully competed for a permanent full time position with Yukon government. I am now working at the same office as where I completed my Grad Corps placement... and now hold the position of my supervisor from Grad Corps. I think the program had a huge impact on my successes in the past year.

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Grad Corps gave me some experience (3 months), and then I was able to successfully compete for a vacant permanent position with the same job description. Lucky me! I would never have been successful on the job application without the Grad Corps experience behind me.

Other web survey respondents, however, indicated feeling like they were left in limbo at the end of their Grad Corps placements in the absence of an available position for which to compete at the end of their Grad Corps placement:

I have been able to continue to work in my field of interest ever since the Grad Corps Program which has now been 5 years. My only issue, however, is the fact that I have been a term, casual, auxiliary-on-call etc. the whole time and cannot seem to get a permanent position which is extremely frustrating and at times defeating. I'm still very grateful for the experience, however, I think YTG very much needs to assess it's ability to provide actual permanent jobs to those people who are gaining experience but have nowhere to 'go' afterwards.

It allowed me to be a viable option to hire for a maternity leave position. I have been in terms and auxiliary-on-call ever since.

As phrased by one key informant, the Grad Corps Program provides only a partial bridge into the Yukon public service. Because Grad Corps positions are contract positions, there must be a “break in service” between the end of a Grad Corps placement and the beginning of a subsequent position with the Yukon Government. As a result, leave credits cannot be carried forward and eligibility for the Yukon Bonus is delayed as are certain health-related benefits. As such, the Grad Corps Program provides a bit of a mixed message to participants about their longer-term career prospects with the Yukon Government.

As outlined in the Yukon Government’s *Corporate Human Resource Strategy 2011-2014*, 40% percent of Yukon Government employees are 50 years or older. The corresponding number of YG employees who are 50 years of age or older is 1,673. With an average age of retirement of 59 years, the need for the Public Service Commission to recruit new employees through programs like Grad Corps is already very strong and will only continue to increase as more and more employees in the “Baby Boom” age cohort (born 1946 to 1964) reach 59 years of age.

Data from the *Yukon Government HR Metrics Snapshot* (November 2011) indicate the Yukon Government employed 4,183 individuals (excluding Yukon Teachers Association members) in 2010/11. As noted above, approximately 19 Grad Corps participants are currently employed by the Yukon Government. Thus, despite the impending need to increase the recruitment rate for younger employees, the Grad Corps Program is poised to make only a very small contribution to overall employment within the Yukon Government. The number of Grad Corps participants employed by the Yukon Government represents less than 1% of total average annual Yukon Government employment.

Yukon Government Budget Estimates for the Public Service Commission for the 2010/11 fiscal year indicate that a total of 640 competitions for indeterminate, term, casual, auxiliary and in-service positions were conducted and a total of 432 new employees were documented. With an average of seven new Grad Corps placements occurring in each year, the potential contribution of the

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Grad Corps Program to the total number of new hires is less than 2%, further confirming that the Grad Corps Program is making nary a dent in the succession planning efforts of the Yukon Government intended to strengthen the Yukon public service.

Finding B:

While the 45% retention rate suggests that the Grad Corps Program is effectively achieving its long-term objective of program participants remaining with the Yukon public service, the retention rate could be further improved by facilitating the achievement of indeterminate status for program participants who find only temporary positions after their placements are finished. Participants clearly indicated that the Grad Corps Program had helped their careers to advance.

While the Grad Corps Program may be on the right track to facilitating departmental recruitment goals and strengthening the Yukon Public Service, with less than 2% of new hires being sourced from the Grad Corps Program each year, it cannot be concluded that the program is doing so in a effective manner.

Efficiency of the Grad Corps Program

Efficiency: the extent to which resources are used such that a greater level of output is produced with the same level of input or, a lower level of input is used to produce the same level of output. The level of input and output could be increases or decreases in quantity, quality, or both.

(Source: Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat. *Policy on Evaluation.*)

Public Service Commission expenditures for regular pay (i.e., excluding fringe benefits) made to Grad Corps participants totaled \$622,710 over the 2007/08 to 2010/11 period and averaged \$18,315 per participant. Program costs are jointly funded by YG line departments which are generally making contributions to Grad Corps placements in the range of 25% to 50%. If it is assumed that all Grad Corps placements are cost-shared 50-50, then the average regular pay cost per Grad Corps participant works out to be \$36,270.

Data on the classification levels of Grad Corps participants during the review period were not available. If it is also assumed that the median classification level for Grad Corps participants during the review period was '12' (given that Grad Corps participants have completed post-secondary diploma and degree programs), the Master Pay Grid indicates that 12-level employees (effective January 1, 2011) would receive an annual minimum salary of \$58,429. As such, the data confirm that Grad Corps participant costs are well-within the average annual regular salary costs for Yukon Government employees. By way of comparison, on the basis of expenditure data from the *Evaluation of the YG Training Corps Program*, the average annual cost of a First Nation Training Corps participant was \$66,941.

Finding C:

On the basis of the limited amount of cost data available for the Grad Corps Program, it appears that the short-term and long-term outcomes of the Grad Corps Program are being achieved in a cost-efficient manner.

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Recommendations to Improve the Effectiveness and Efficiency of the Grad Corps Program

- R1. Develop a comprehensive program reporting system that involves both the Public Service Commission and YG line departments which tracks basic program operation information including the age of participants and actual spending contributions made by line departments.
- R2. In recognition of the importance of the quality of supervision to whether Grad Corp participants have positive work experiences with the Yukon Government, undertake research to identify supervisory “best practices” for Grad Corps participants and develop an award/recognition program for effective Grad Corps supervisors.
- R3. With a potential contribution by the Grad Corps Program to the total annual number of new hires of less than 2%, acknowledge that the Grad Corps program is having a very limited impact on overall YG hiring patterns. Consider refocusing the regular YG hiring process to assess and recognize the potential contribution of post-secondary graduates to the Yukon public service and develop support strategies for that potential to be realized.
- R4. In recognition of the impending succession predicament facing YG, consider building a package of options specifically targeted to young public service candidates which could include the Grad Corps program, the Student Training and Employment Program (STEP), cooperative work / study placements and other initiatives as appropriate.
- R5. Consider removing the requirement for a break in service between Grad Corps contract positions and subsequent employment with the Yukon Government to send a stronger signal to program participants that they are valued by the organization as a way to bolster the retention rate for the program.