

Connecting and Contrasting: International Surveys and Demonstration Projects

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SOCIAL RESEARCH
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Key Messages

- 1. While international surveys can help us understand policy challenges and motivate policy change...
...they cannot measure the direct effects of policy and program *interventions***

Surveys and Demonstration projects: address different policy questions

1. Cross-sectional Surveys → Point-in-time measures

- “Where are we now? How did we get here? How do we compare?”
 - **Identification of “at-risk” groups, sectors, industries**
e.g. distribution of skills gaps among workers
 - **Exploring relationships between variables** e.g. education literacy skills, and labour market outcomes
 - **Cross-country comparisons** e.g. how do we measure up

Surveys and Demonstration projects: address different policy questions

2. Demonstration projects → Measure the impacts of specific policy interventions

- *"What works and for whom? Where do we go from here?"*
- **Effects** – establish the links between interventions and outcomes
- **Explanatory factors** – in what contexts and for whom do interventions work best?
- **Return on Investment** – under what conditions are returns maximized and are government investments most effective?

Recent Demonstration Projects

- **UPSKILL: Essentials to Excel**
- **Measures of Success**
- **BC Workplace Training Project**

UPSKILL – Essentials to Excel

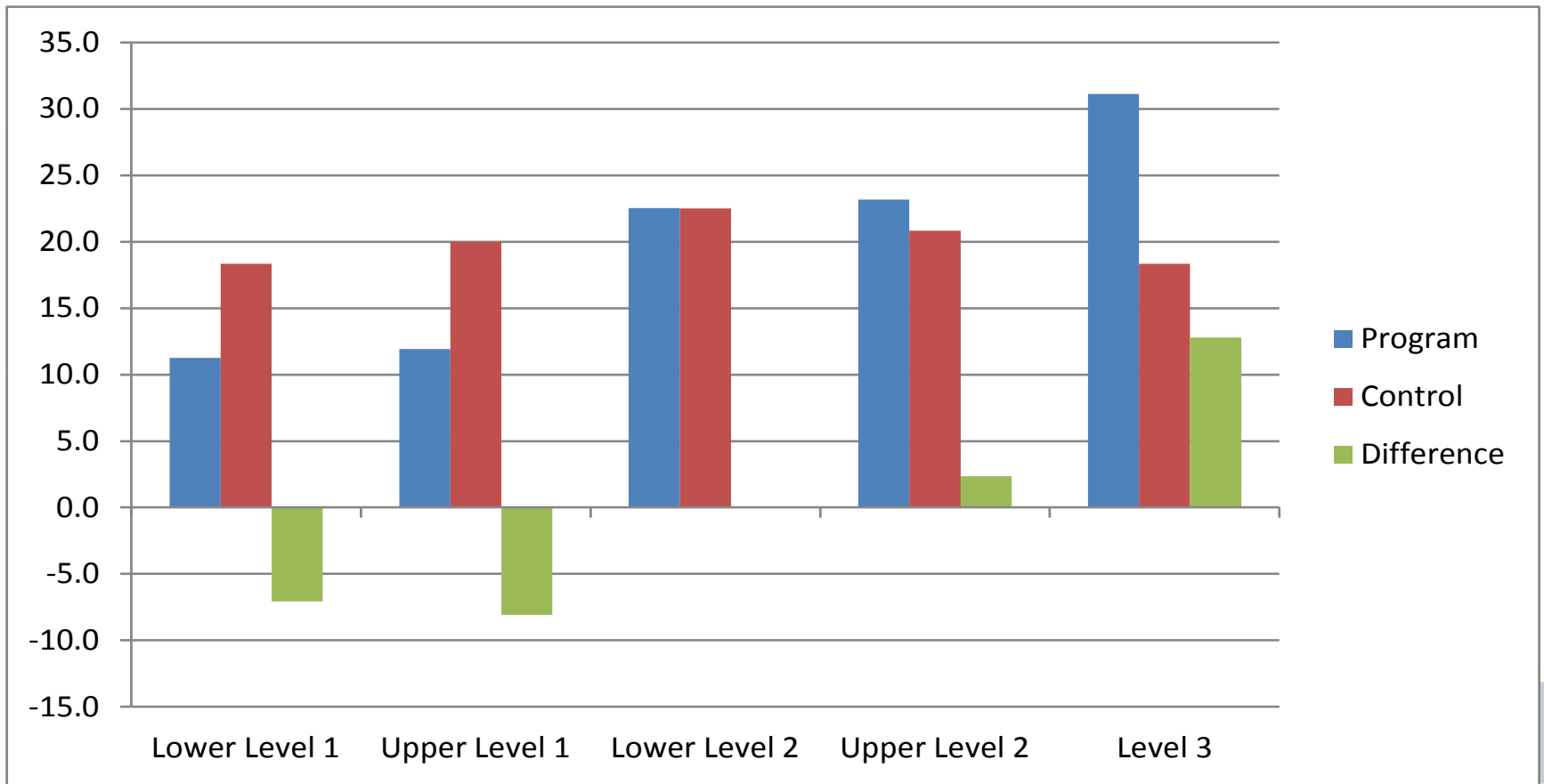
- ▶ Pan-Canadian demonstration project
- ▶ Measuring the impacts of workplace LES training on workers and firms
- ▶ Large scale Randomized Control Trial (RCT)
- ▶ Allows for a rigorous cost-benefit study and the measurement of return on investment (ROI)
- ▶ Funded by the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills, HRSDC

UPSKILL – Essentials to Excel

- ▶ 110 firms in the Accommodations Sector
- ▶ 1455 participants in frontline occupations, custodial, sales and service, administrative
- ▶ Half randomly assigned to receive training – approximately 20 hours of training over 4–6 weeks
- ▶ Partnerships with CTHRC, Training Group at Douglas College, SkillPlan
- ▶ Over a dozen industry groups and literacy organizations provide training across 8 provinces

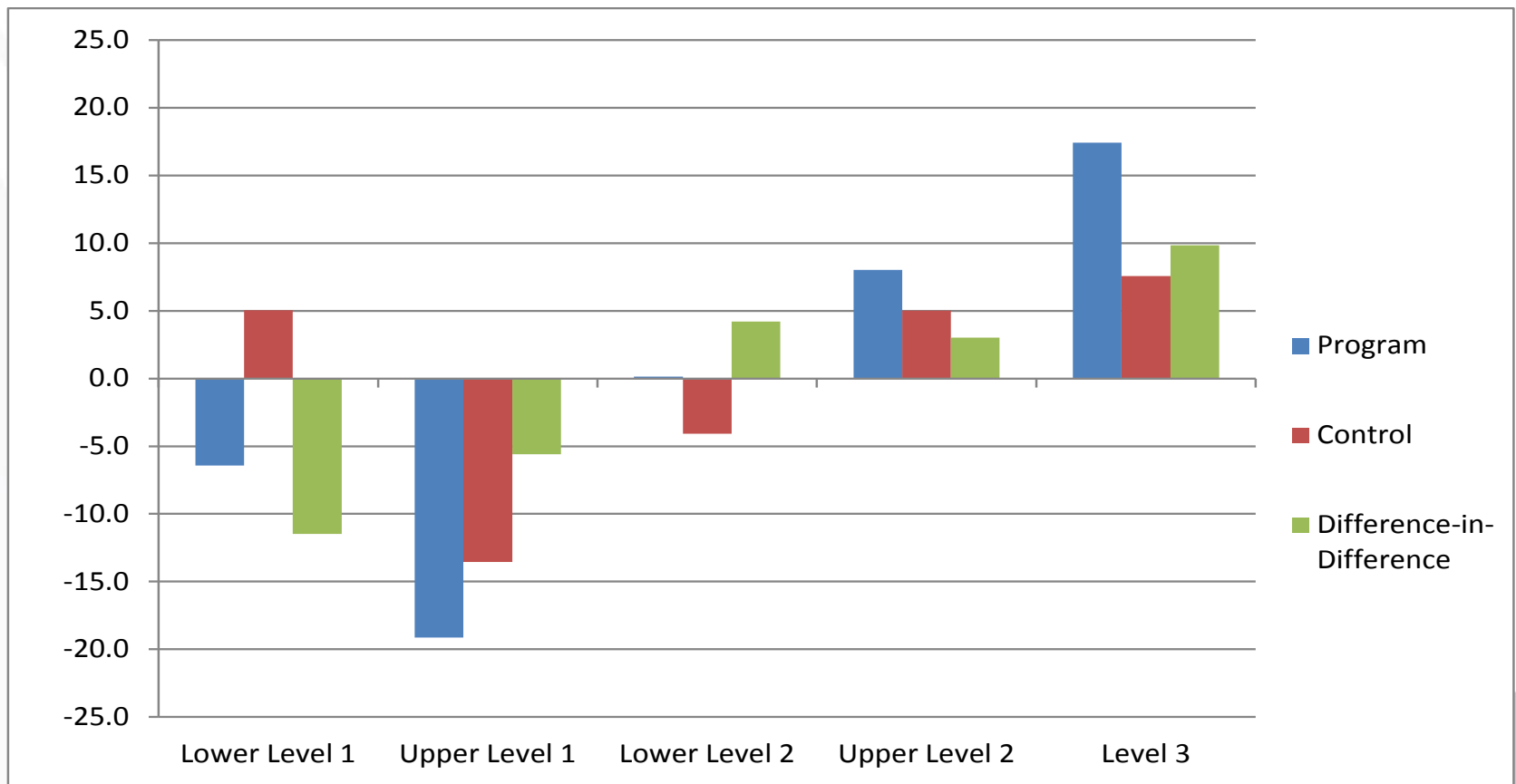
UPSKILL Impacts– Essential Skills

Distributional Impacts: Document Use Levels All Provinces at 6-months



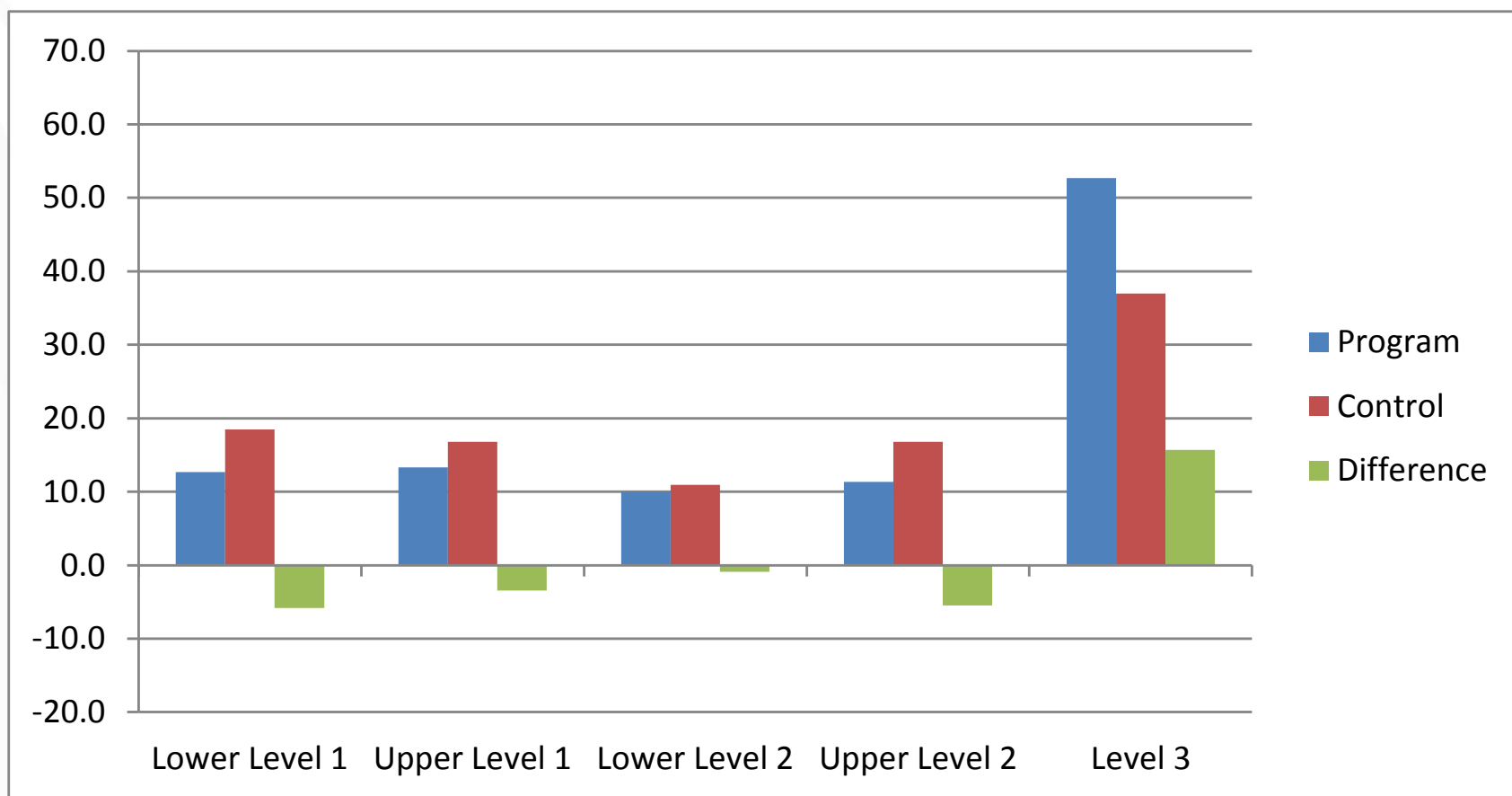
UPSKILL Impacts– Essential Skills

Distributional Impacts: Change in percentage at each DU level
All Provinces, from baseline to 6-months



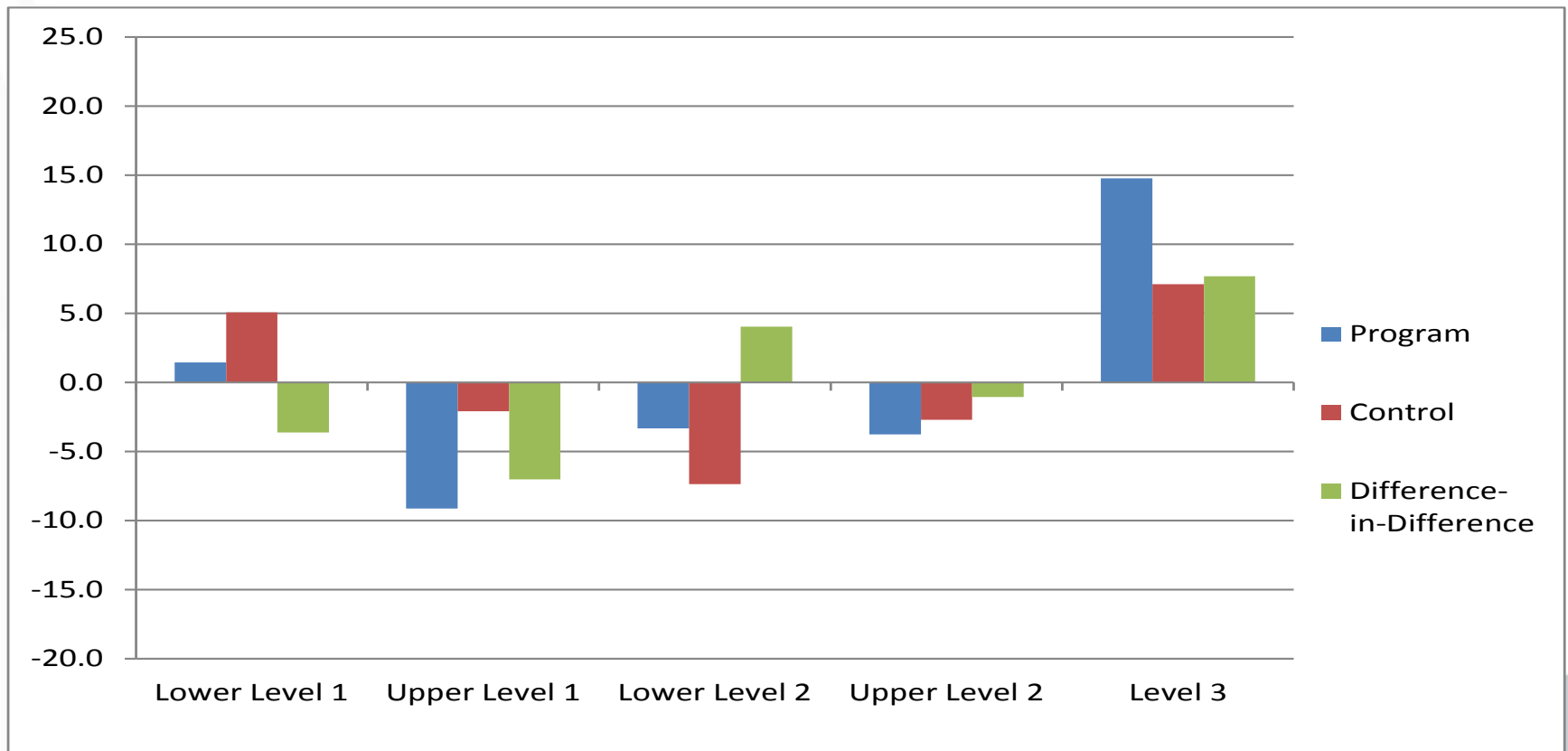
Impacts– Essential Skills

Distributional Impacts: Numeracy Levels All Provinces at 6-months



UPSKILL Impacts– Essential Skills

Distributional Impacts: Change in percentage at each NUM level
All Provinces from baseline to 6-months



Key Messages

- 2. Crucial to have an underlying framework that links literacy skills to job performance and ultimately to the business outcomes of interest to firms**

Core Business priorities...

Business Needs

Enhancing
Customer
Relations

Maintaining
Service
Excellence

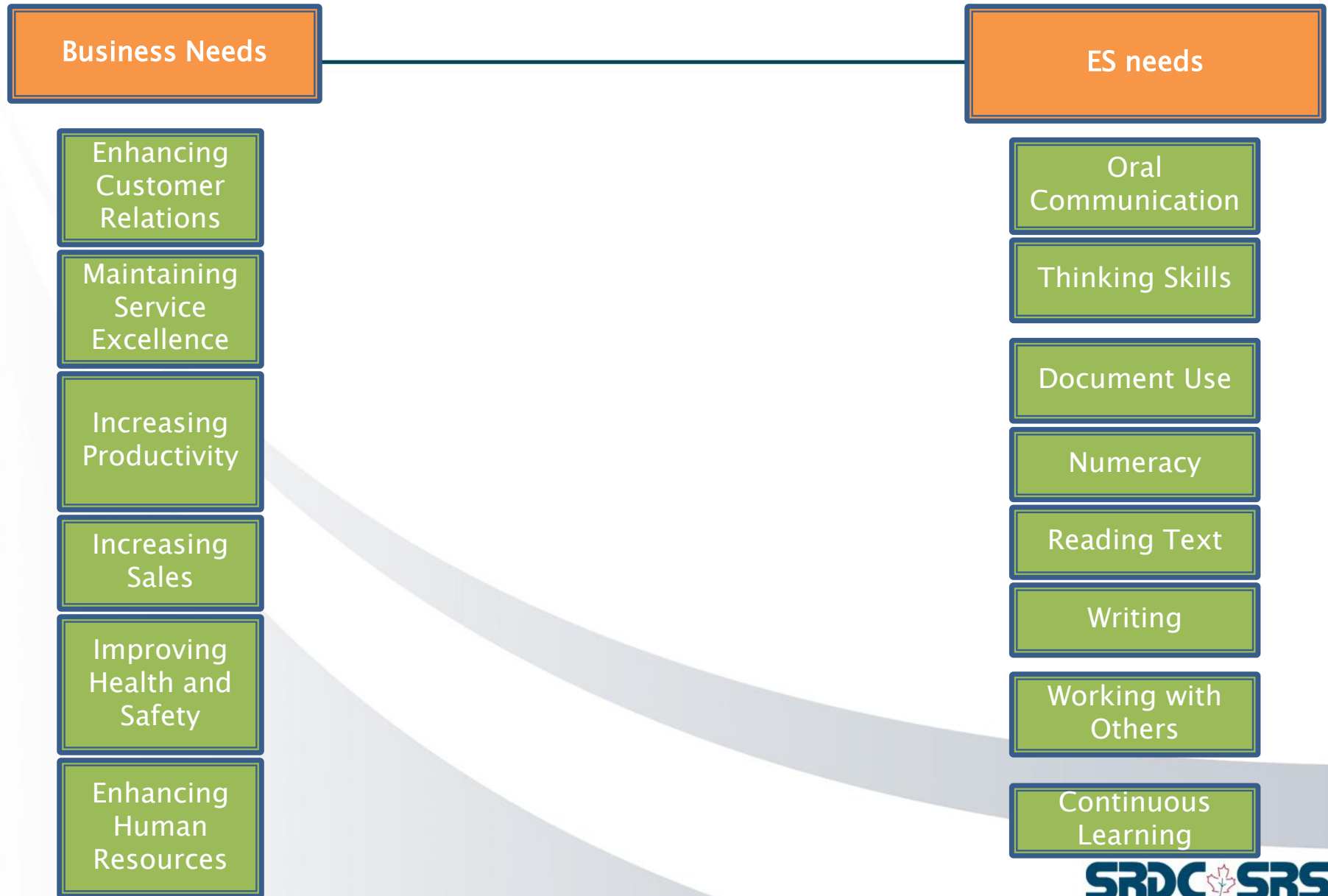
Increasing
Productivity

Increasing
Sales

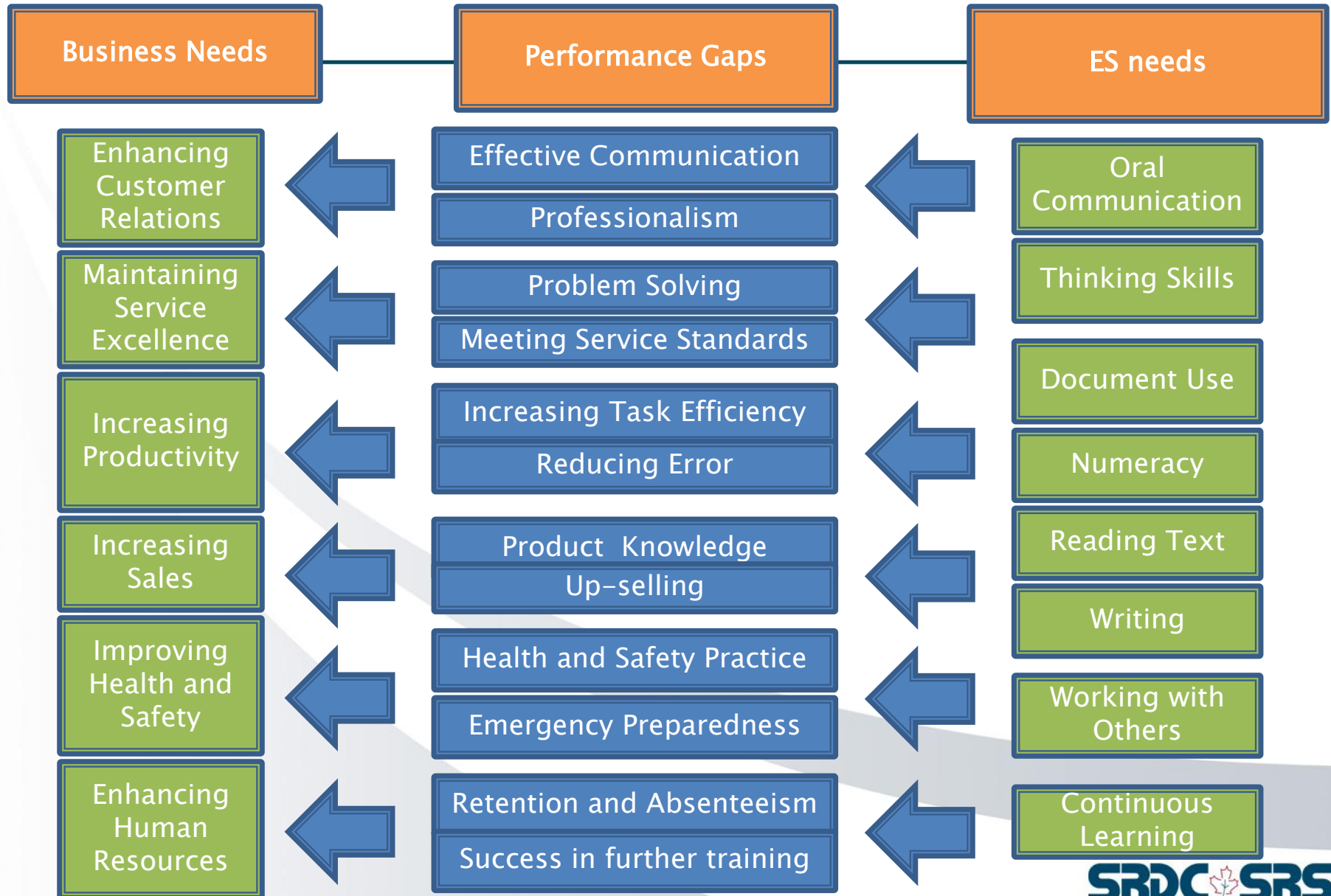
Improving
Health and
Safety

Enhancing
Human
Resources

....Essential Skills targeted



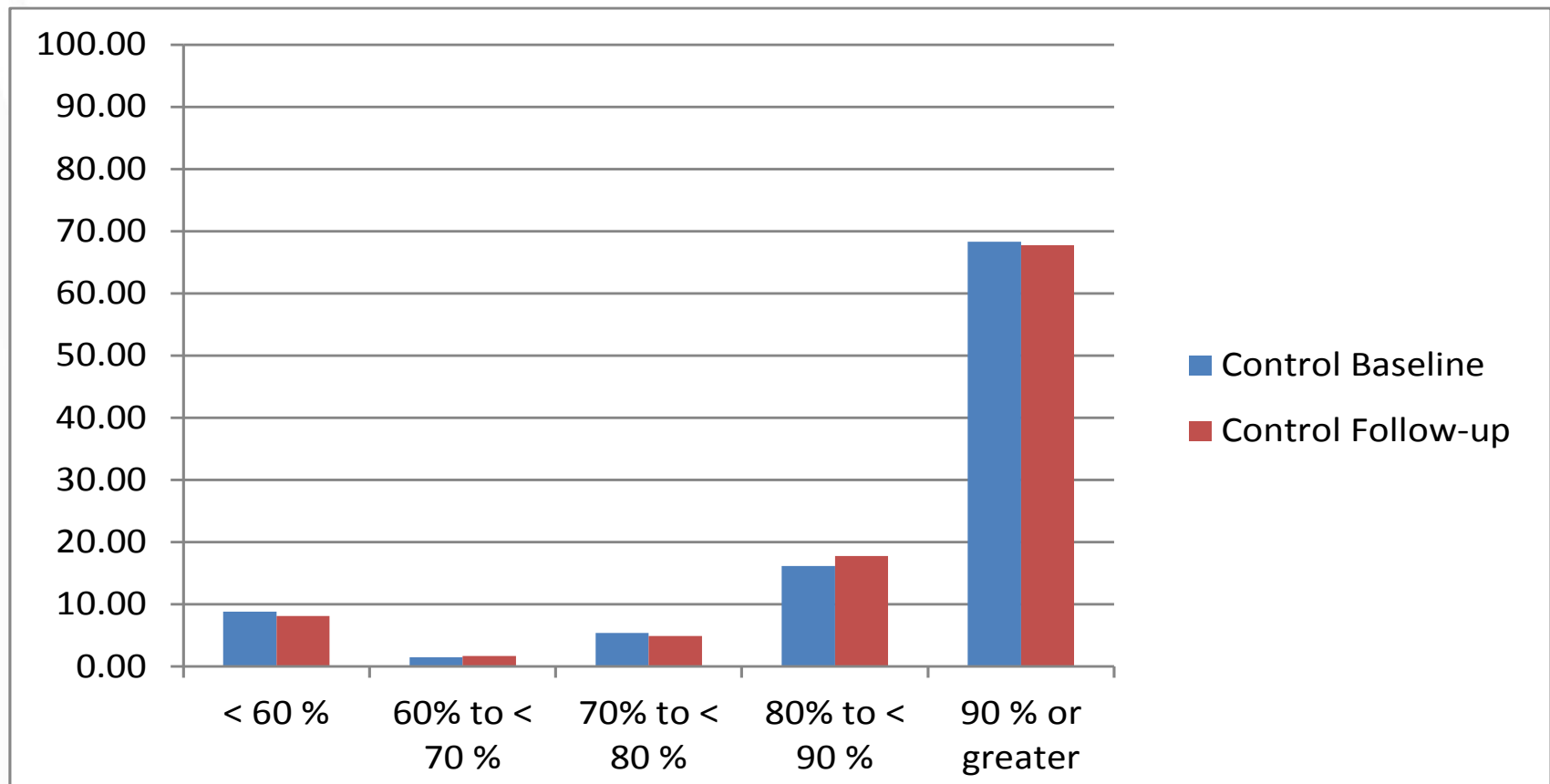
The missing link – key performance outcomes



UPSKILL Impacts– Job Performance

Guest Relations, Oral communication

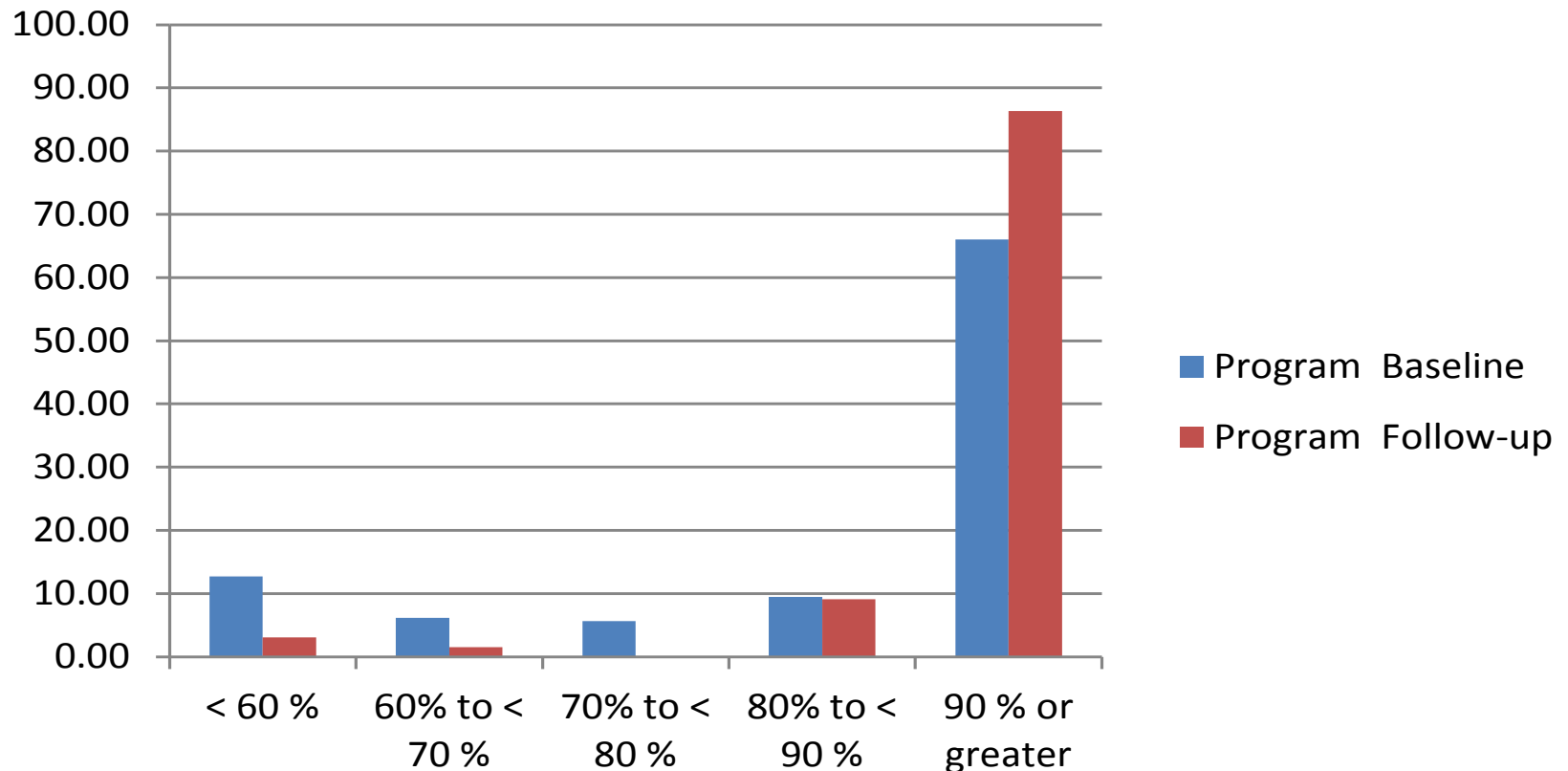
Control Group, Percentage at each level, Baseline to 6-Months



UPSKILL Impacts– Job Performance

Guest Relations, Oral communication

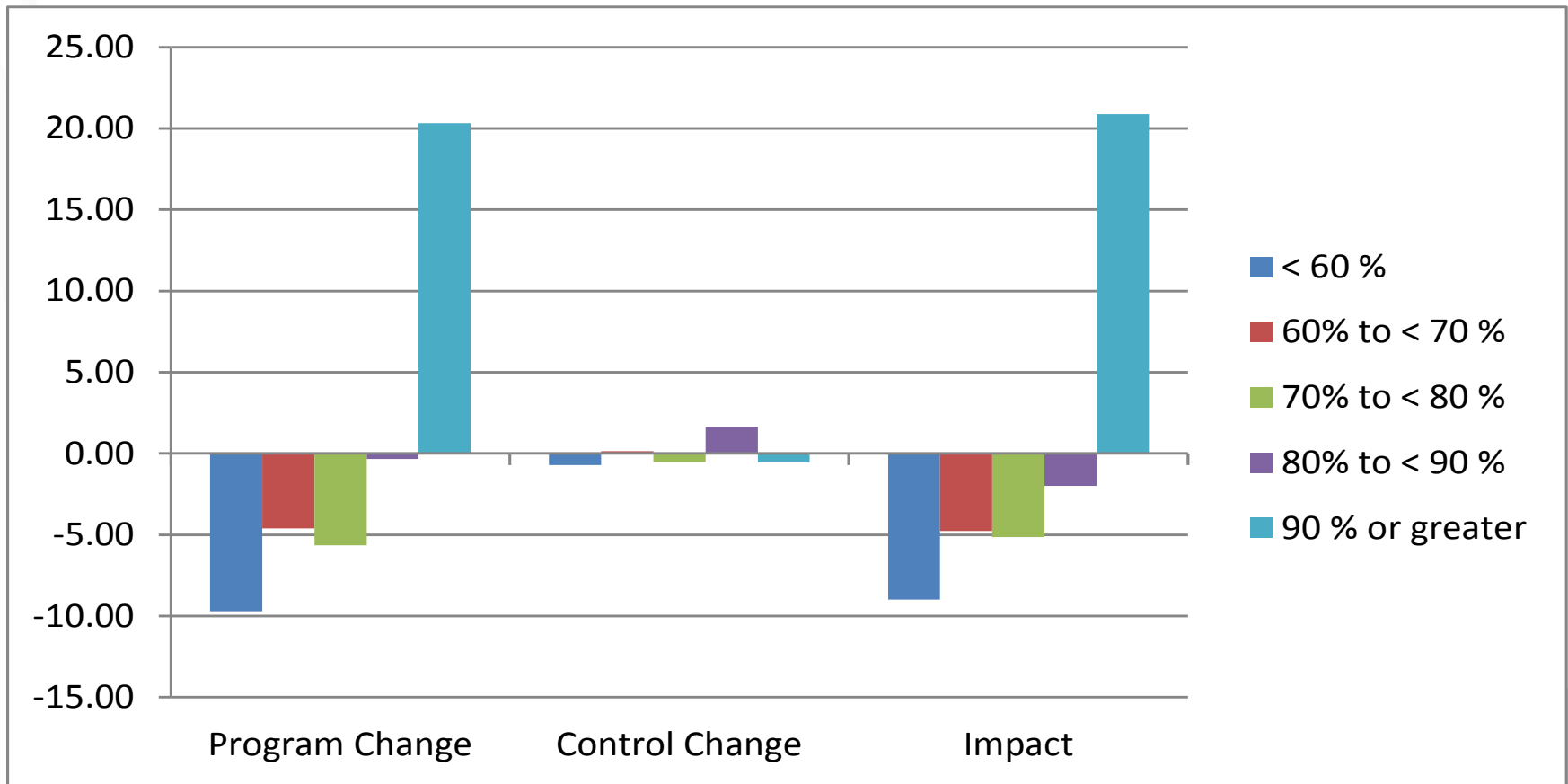
Program Group: Percentage at each level, Baseline to 6-Months



UPSKILL Impacts– Job Performance

Guest Relations, Oral communication

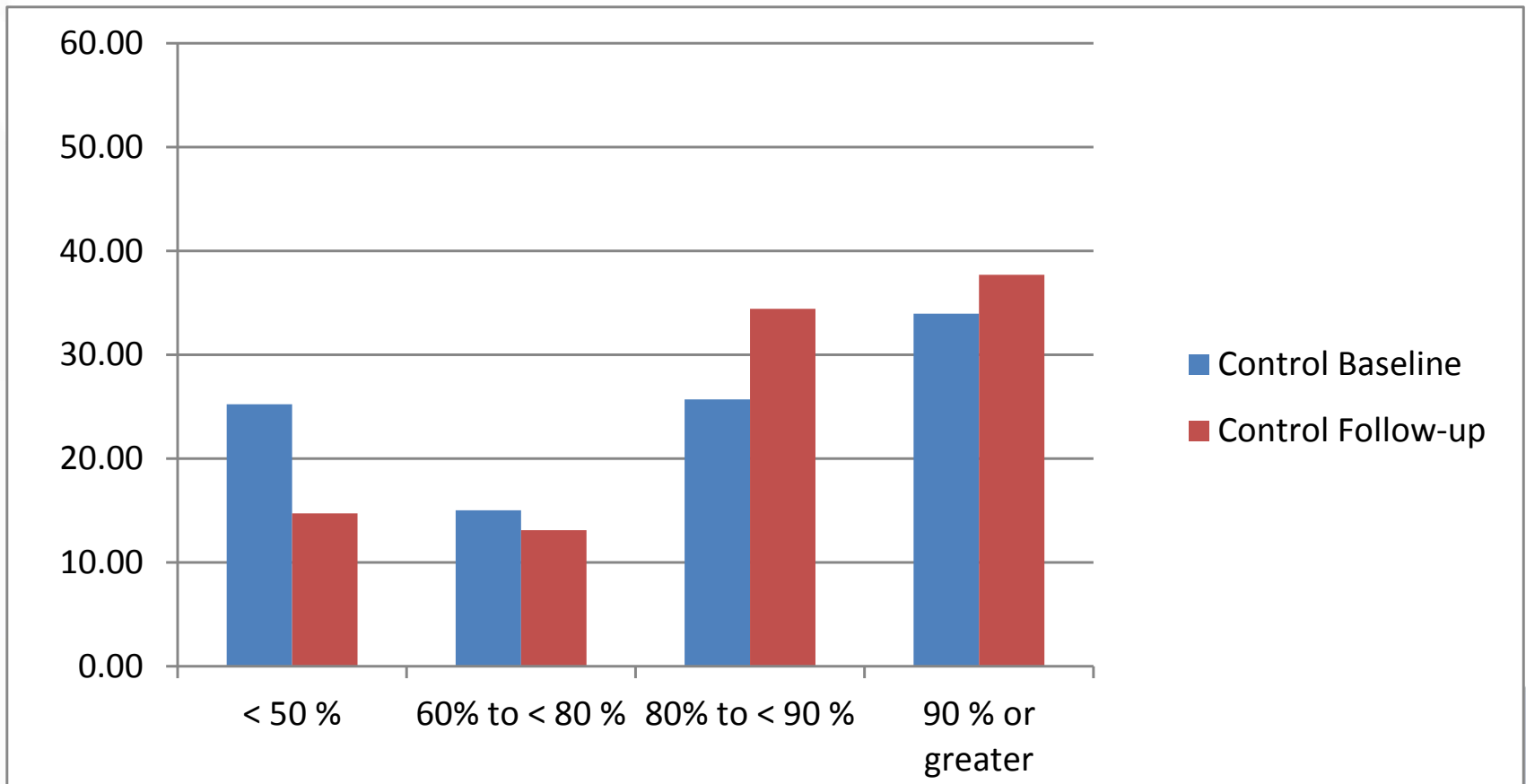
Change in Percentage at each level, Baseline to 6-Months



UPSKILL Impacts– Job Performance

Problem Solving: Resolving Customer Complaints

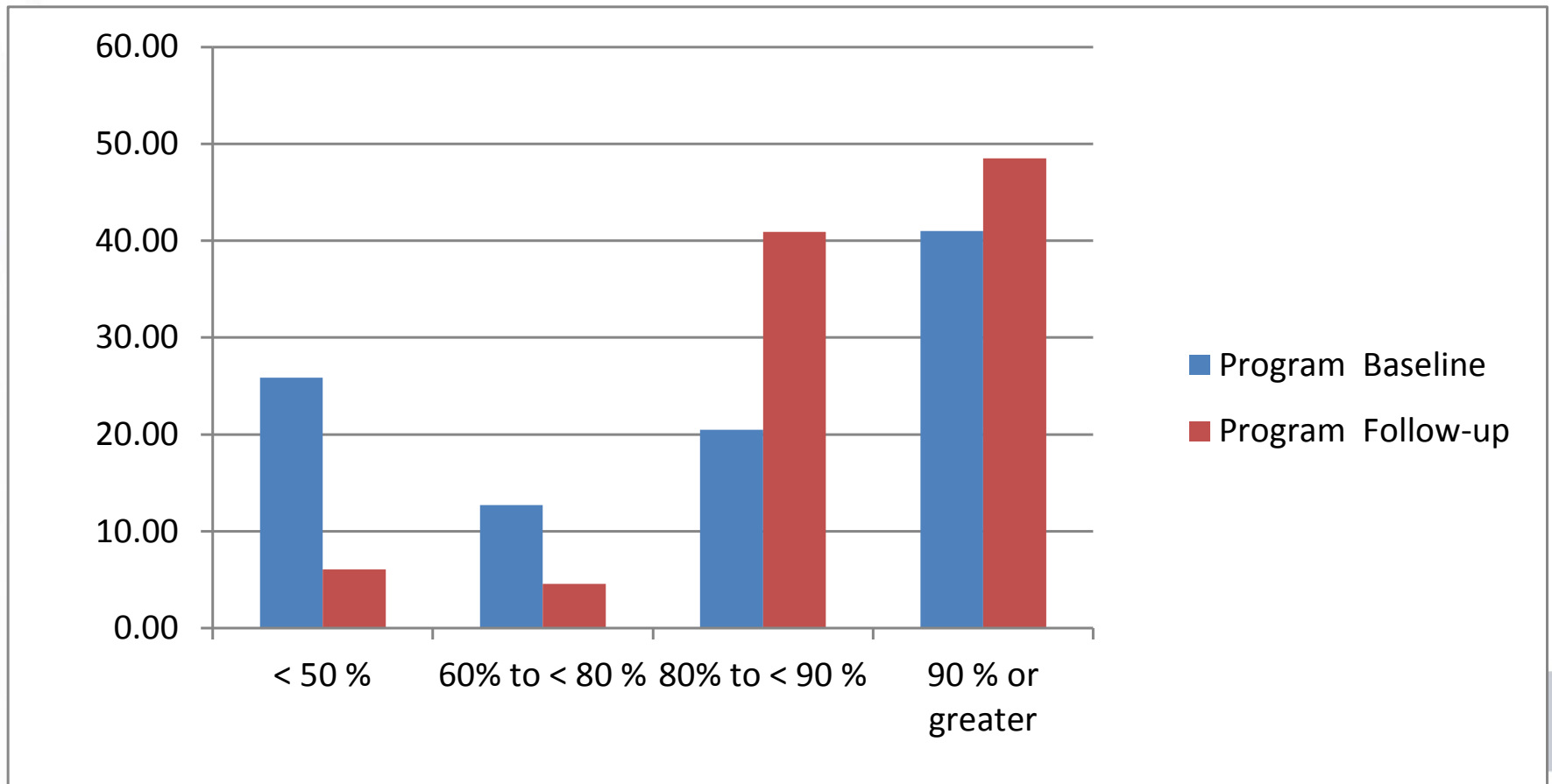
Control Group: Percentage at each level, Baseline to 6-Months



UPSKILL Impacts– Job Performance

Problem Solving: Resolving Customer Complaints

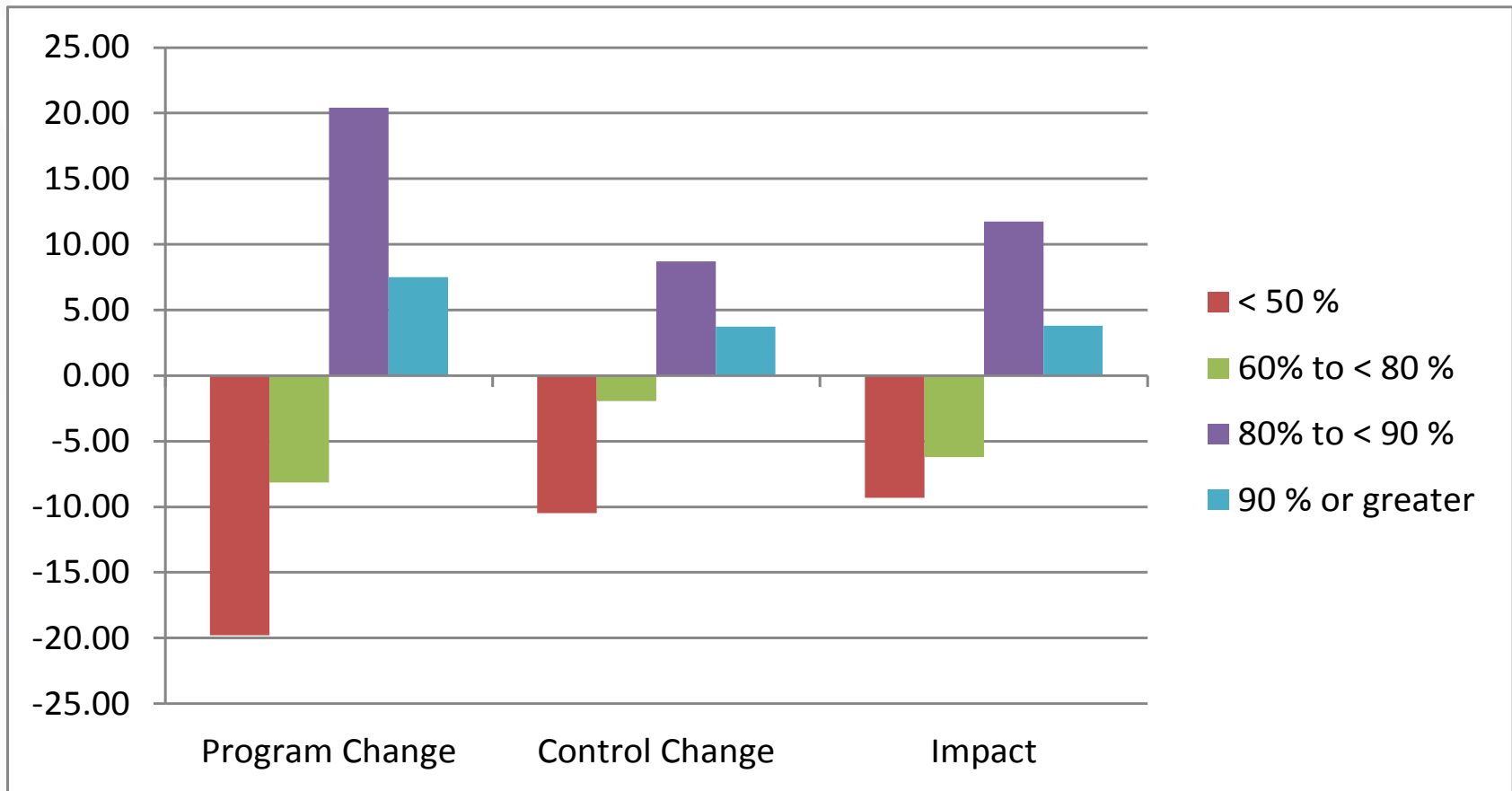
Program Group: Percentage at each level, Baseline to 6-Months



UPSKILL Impacts– Job Performance

Problem Solving: Resolving Customer Complaints

Change in Percentage at each level, Baseline to 6-Months



Key Messages

3. In order to understand conditions for training success, an evaluation framework must go beyond skills to include CONTEXT....

...learner characteristics, firm context, and training process

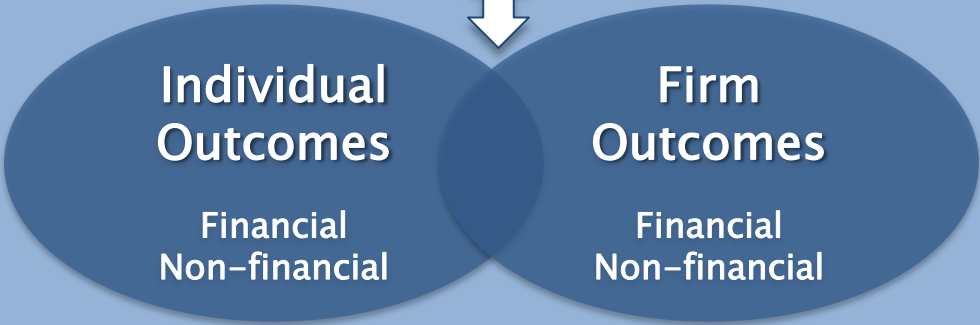
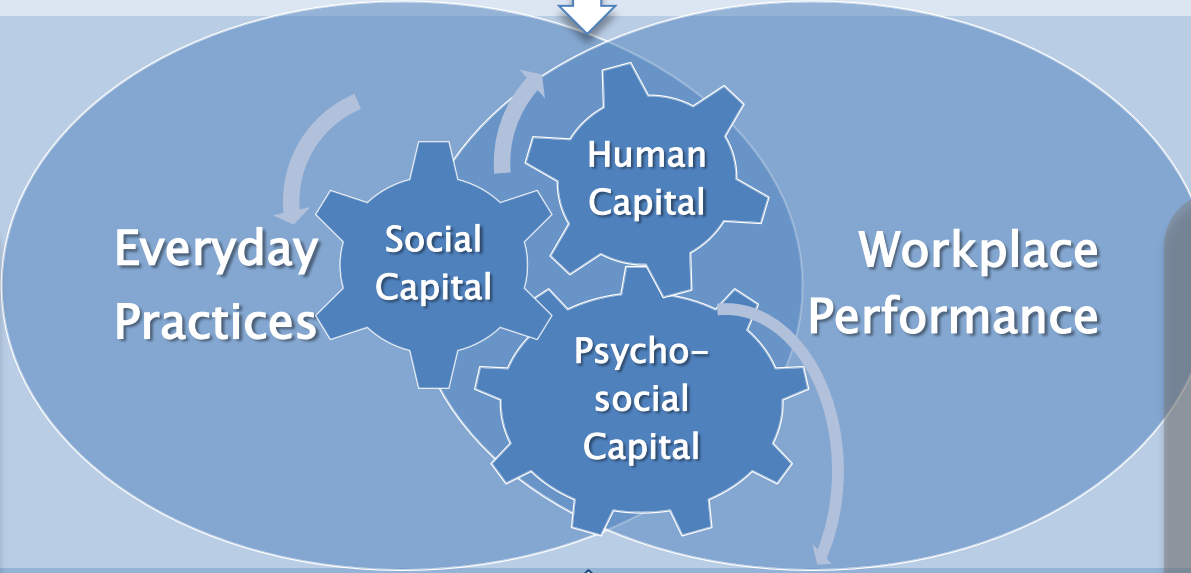
Inputs, activity, outputs

Intermediate Outcomes

Long-term Outcomes

Returns

Workplace LES Training



Individual ROI

Firm ROI

Gov't ROI

Measures of Success (MoS)

- ▶ Partnership between Centre for Literacy, Workplace Education Manitoba, and Nova Scotia's Department of Labour and Advanced Education
- ▶ Goal was to DEVELOP and IMPLEMENT an evaluation model to measure the long-term outcomes of ongoing workplace LES initiatives
- ▶ 18 firms in Manitoba and Nova Scotia, about 225 learners
- ▶ Funded by HRSDC's Office of Literacy and Essential Skills

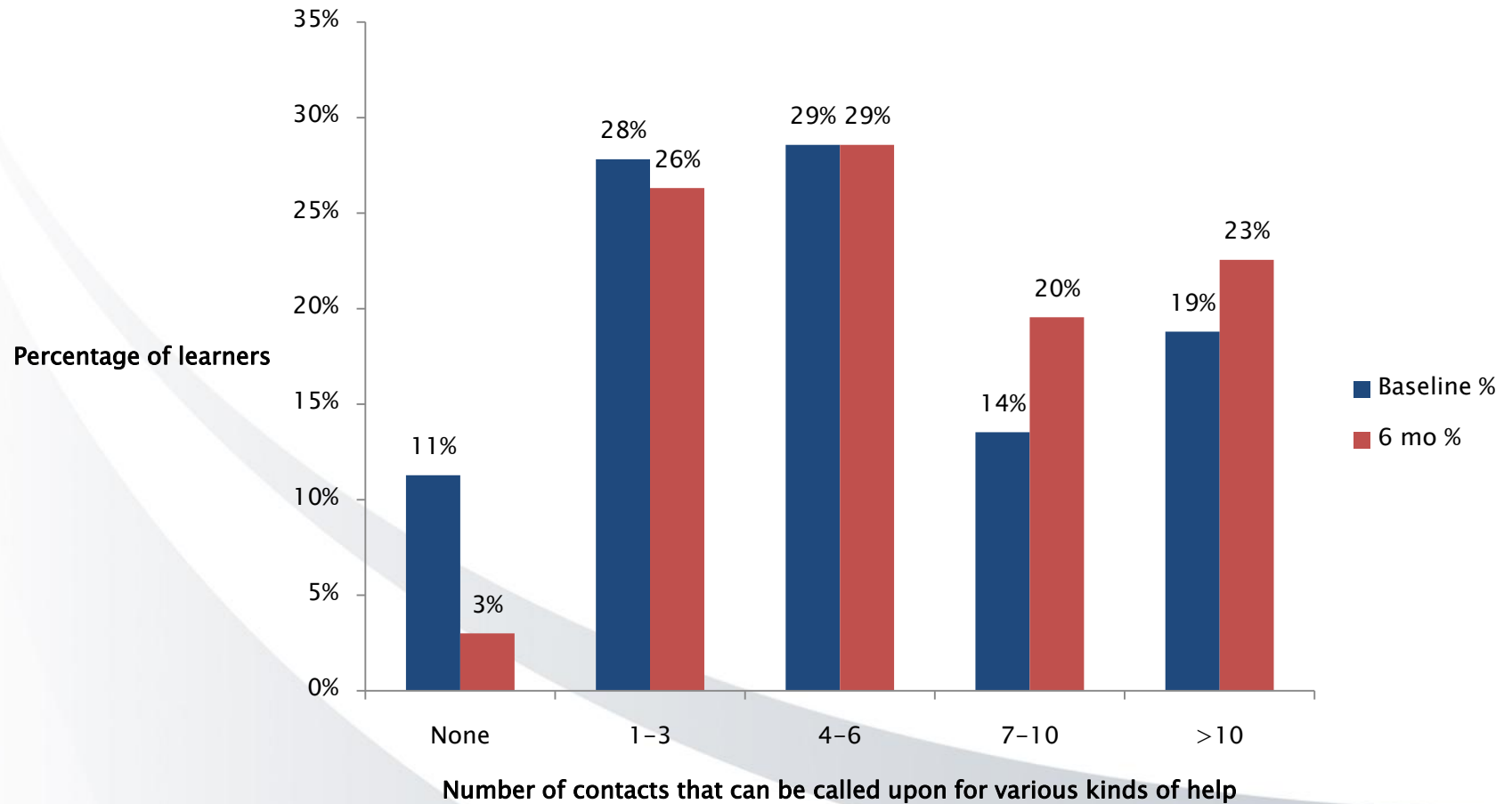
Workplace Training Program, British Columbia (WTP)

- ▶ Led by Douglas College, delivered by a consortium of 14 post-secondary institutions across B.C.
- ▶ Designed to provide ES training opportunities to retail and food & beverage workers
- ▶ Sectoral partnership model, with deep industry engagement at all stages
- ▶ 1000+ employees, 400+ employers
- ▶ Funding provided through the Canada–British Columbia Labour Market Agreement

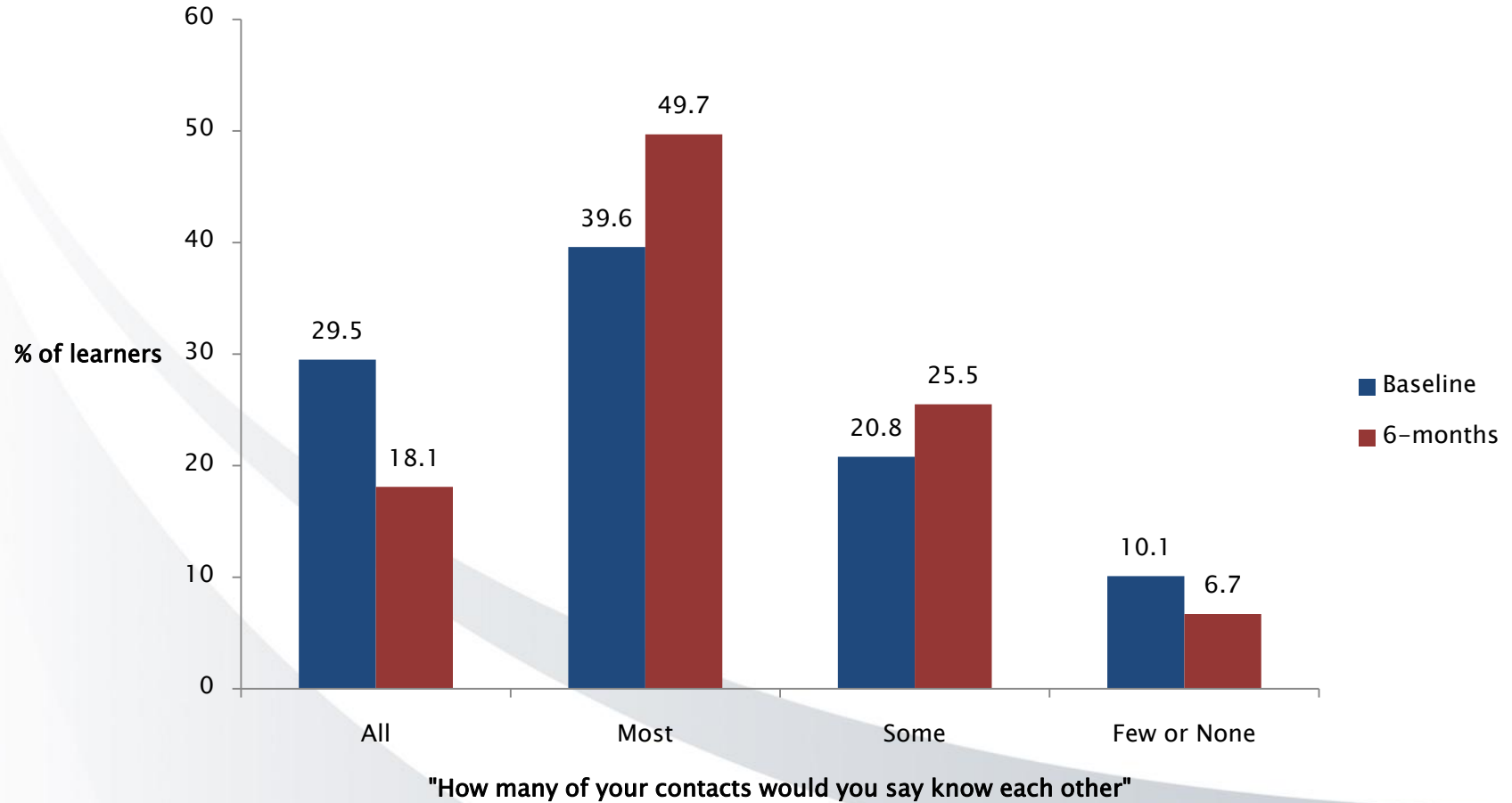
Links between skills training interventions and outcomes

- ▶ **Some survey measures capture change better than others**
 - Skill use in everyday life is responsive to workplace-base training (MoS)
 - No change in skill use at work; doesn't capture performance improvements recognized by both employees and employers (MoS)
- ▶ **Outcomes of interventions may go beyond what surveys usually measure**
 - Social capital – network size and diversity (MoS)
 - Well-being – work and life satisfaction (MoS)
 - Non-cognitive skills – motivation and engagement at work, future orientation, self-esteem, and attitudes towards learning (WTP)
 - Employer/business outcomes – recognition of performance improvements, willingness to pay for further training (WTP)

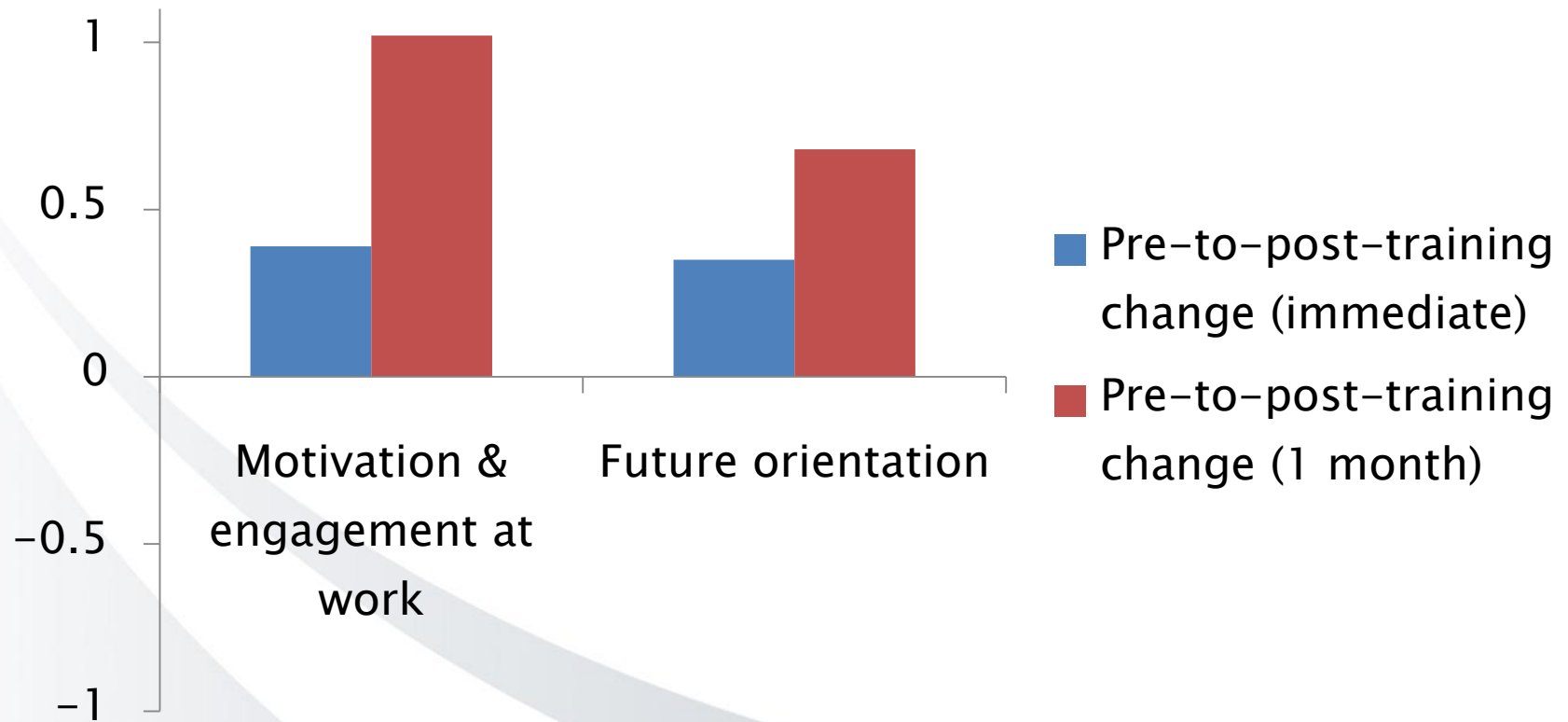
Changes in Social Capital: Total Number of Contacts



Changes in Social Capital: Network Density



Changes in non-cognitive skills



Source: Workplace Training Program, British Columbia.

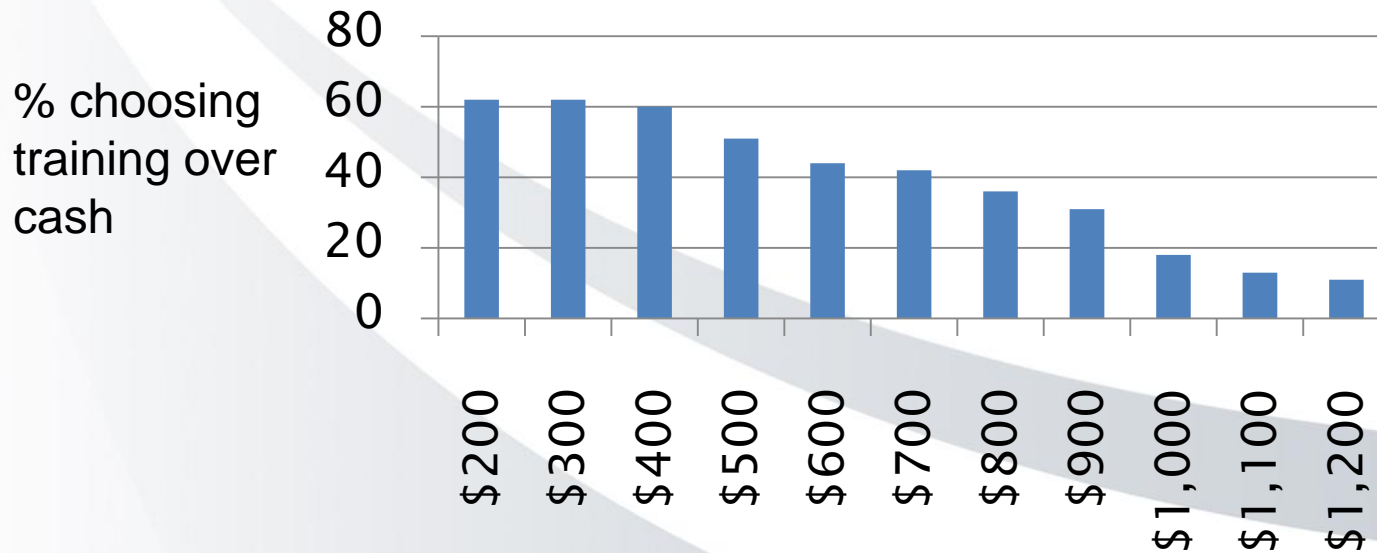
Making the link from skill gains to performance to value to employers

- ▶ Gains in motivation & engagement and future orientation linked with employee self-rated performance improvement...
- ▶ ...which is linked with employer-reported performance improvement...
- ▶ ...which is linked with employer willingness to pay for further training

Employer willingness to pay

Employers asked to make a series of post-training decisions:

- Training for one more employee or varying amounts of cash to invest in their business
- Real-stakes lottery gave them a 1 in 10 chance of actually winning one of their decisions



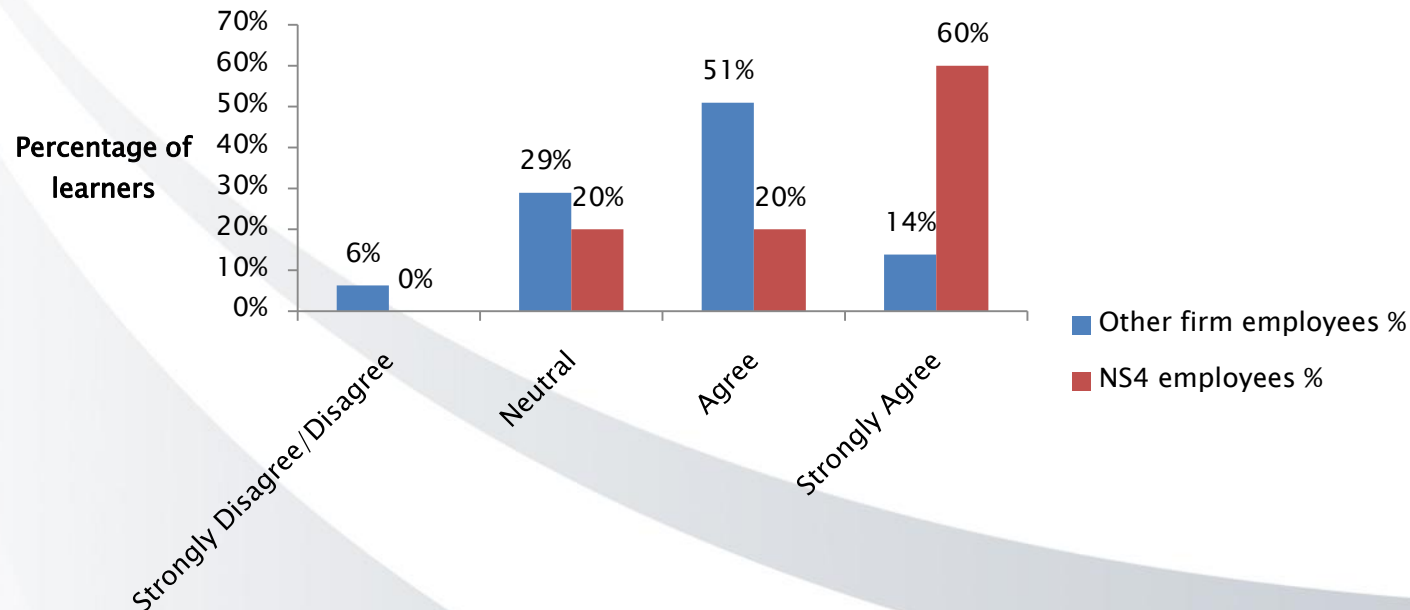
Source: Workplace Training Program, British Columbia.

Measures of Success– in what contexts and for whom do interventions work?

- ▶ Post-training gains and performance improvements for “at-risk” sub-groups
 - Low educational attainment/low income
 - Immigrants who regularly use languages other than English
 - Aboriginal learners
- ▶ Learner characteristics are important
 - Training motivation, goals, and utility linked with skill gains, performance improvement
- ▶ Firm context is important
 - Existing training resources, firm size linked with performance improvement
- ▶ Implementation factors are important
 - Training alignment with business needs, longer duration linked with performance improvement

Measures of Success - Business Contrasts

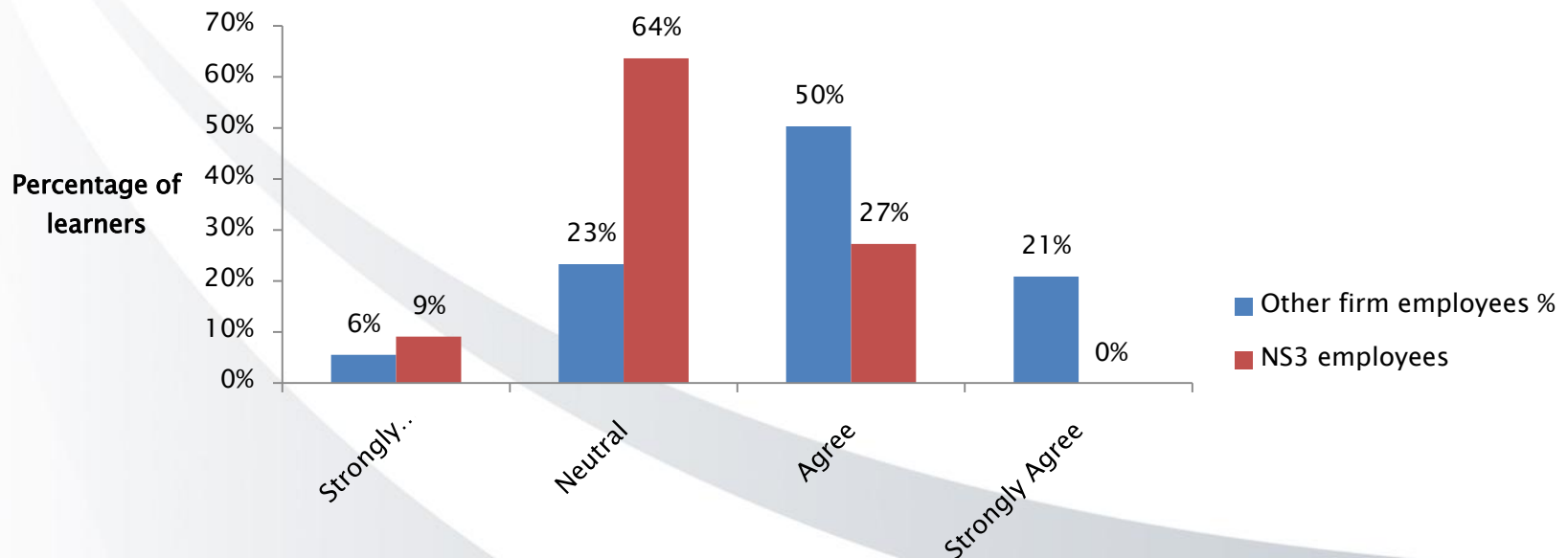
- ▶ Better outcomes in businesses with supporting conditions
 - Highly motivated learners, existing training supports, more training hours, better training alignment with business needs



Responses to "I now understand and use workplace documents more easily"

Measures of Success - Business Contrasts

- ▶ Relatively poor outcomes in businesses with a lack of supporting conditions
 - Less motivated learners, few training supports, fewer training hours, poor training alignment with business needs



Responses to "I am now more organized and able to plan my time more effectively"