

Evidence Brief

Developing & Sustaining a Youth-Led Social Enterprise & Promising Practices for Supporting Youth Through Social Enterprises

How Did We Compile This Evidence?

We searched several databases – including Google, Google Scholar, EBSCOhost, Scholars Portal, and ProQuest – with the following search terms: youth led social enterprise(s); farmers market social enterprise(s); “best practices” and “youth” and “social enterprise or social entrepreneurship”; “social enterprise or social entrepreneurship” and “employment training”; “social enterprise or social entrepreneurship” and “employment training” and “youth or adolescents or young people or teen or young adult.”

Summary of Evidence

This evidence brief divides the literature into two themes: 1) developing and sustaining a youth-led social enterprise, and 2) promising practices: supporting youth through social enterprises. The first theme provides promising practices for the ‘how-to’ of developing and operating a social enterprise, while the second theme focuses on how to holistically support youth through social enterprise employment models.

Literature Summary

1. Developing and Sustaining a Youth-Led Social Enterprise

Brankovic, A. (2012). *Handbook: Youth led social enterprise*. London, England: National Council for Voluntary Youth Services. Retrieved from <https://unltd.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Youth-led-social-enterprise-report-formatted.pdf>

This handbook is structured around a series of case studies (p. 7-12), which aim to demonstrate how young people can be involved in and drive social enterprise activities. Promising practices for operations of youth-led social enterprises are provided from pages 15-18; some of these include:

Starting up: Be certain where your product fits in the current market; have a strong message about who you are and what you offer (as a product, and socially); seek out mentors; be prepared to be resilient, emotionally and physically.

Running your business: Regularly review what you offer to customers; evaluate your product and your impact on the community; value staff; incorporate mentoring; involve young people at all times; cultivate relationships with networks and decision-makers; make proactive decisions about finances and if you will seek out funding opportunities.

Towards sustainability: Ensure your services are responding to a need, and stay plugged into what the needs are; ensure you can measure impact; engage with youth at all levels of the social enterprise; help youth make the best of their strengths and support them in developing these; set targets for self-sustainability, expansion, and scaling up.

Linton, K.F. (2013). Developing a social enterprise as a social worker. *Administration in Social Work*, 37(5), 458-470.

The author of this article is a social worker who founded a social enterprise bakery to provide employment services for people with disabilities. This article may be helpful, as it outlines the 'how-to' for social workers developing social enterprises. This process includes: needs assessment (p. 460); researching supply and demand (p. 461); developing a logic model (p. 462); financial planning (p. 462); creating an interdisciplinary team (p. 463); obtaining legal consultation (p. 463); marketing and advertising (p. 463); implementation (p. 664); and evaluation and impact measurement (p. 464).

2. Promising Practices: Supporting Youth Through Social Enterprises

Amyot, S., & Fairholm Mader, K. (2014). *Pathways to success for youth in BC's Capital region: The power and potential of social enterprise*. Vancouver, BC: BC Centre for Employment Excellence. Retrieved from

http://www.communitycouncil.ca/sites/default/files/2014_Youth_Social_Enterprise_Report_CFEBC_CSPC.pdf

The purpose of this paper is to locate the practice of social enterprise in the context of what is already known about employment development for young people facing barriers to employment, to consider the potential role of social enterprise in creating solutions to youth unemployment, and to assess the potential of this approach to address youth unemployment. This paper draws on case studies to promote the following promising practices for providing employment opportunities to youth through social enterprise models (p. 49):

- Involve employers, sector associations, First Nations, unions, training institutions, public school system, employment developers, and community organizations.
- Focus on partnerships and draw upon existing community assets.
- Focus on filling the related gaps in work experience, and building workplace, life, and essential skills.
- Support youth to succeed at entry-level positions in order to move into opportunities for career advancement.
- Provide access to sectors that offer livable wages.
- Keep an eye to the most vulnerable youth in the region, whose unemployment can lead to lifelong poverty.
- Integrate strategies to address the needs of the youth participants.

The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. (2015). *Youth Employment Toolkit*. Retrieved from http://www.homelesshub.ca/youthemploymenttoolkit?_ga=2.77393692.866591963.1519998636-515646686.1517510001

This toolkit provides ideas for youth-serving agencies that want to provide employment opportunities for ‘at-risk’ youth. While the examples are tailored to homeless youth, many are transferable to vulnerable youth. This resource emphasizes that in order for social enterprises to provide effective employment opportunities to youth, they must tailor supports to the needs of youth. They outline the following considerations in the section “Supports to Success” (p. 45) when employing vulnerable youth (with particular attention to homeless youth):

- Connect employment training with housing stability. Youth should be supported to find or maintain housing, either independently, with the same agency, or through a community partner.
- Provide start-up costs, including transportation, work clothing, and necessary supplies/equipment.
- Provide life-skills training to assist the youth with development of practical skills that will serve them after the program is complete. In particular, obtaining a bank account and developing a budget, creating a resume, interview skills, etc.
- Figure out a plan to address issues of lateness and attendance. These present particular challenges for street-involved youth who may not have the same ability to adhere to a structured routine as housed youth.
- Build in access to education – especially a GED – if possible. This will help improve outcomes after the program for the young person. Support a young person’s goals for future educational attainment. This could include discussing educational programs,

- assisting with applications, and applying for scholarships.
- Create opportunities for job shadowing/mentorship so that youth can see what a program looks like in a real-world application.
- Consider a weekly or bi-weekly pay schedule, rather than monthly.
- Provide staff with work phones so that youth can contact staff directly after hours.

European Learning for Youth in Social Entrepreneurship (ELYSE). (2016). *European Learning for Youth in Social Entrepreneurship (ELYSE) Final Report*. Retrieved from <http://www.gsen.global/projects/elyse>

This report brings together an overview of learnings and insights from The European Learning for Youth in Social Entrepreneurship project on promising practices to inspire, educate, and support young social entrepreneurs. This report has been included as it provides some promising practices for program design (p. 19), which include combining:

- **Individual support:** coaching to overcome business issues and develop emotional resilience, shadowing opportunities, mentoring;
- **Collective support:** peer-to-peer support, workshops, networking opportunities, site visits;
- **Physical premises:** offer opportunities for co-working spaces with other social enterprises.

Morantz, A. (n.d). *Aboriginal Youth Development: The Social Enterprise Dimension*. Kingston, ON: Centre for Social Impact, Smith School of Business, Queen's University. Retrieved from https://smith.queensu.ca/_templates/documents/centres/csi/aboriginal-youth-development.pdf

This discussion paper explores social enterprise models that support Aboriginal youth in Canada. Some great examples are provided throughout the paper (see p. 10). This paper asked: when social enterprises are making a positive contribution to Aboriginal Youth Development – when they are operating in this space at their best – what does it look like? The paper offers the following defining features:

- Initiatives are properly targeted and strategically sound (p. 6).
- Respond to Aboriginal youth aspirations (p. 9).
- Built to last by working with communities (p. 10).
- Built to scale through collaboration (importance of partnerships emphasized on p. 12).
- Use impact investment to support entrepreneurship (p. 14).
- Build in learning loops for partners to get smart (p. 17).

Additional Resources:

The Counselling Foundation of Canada and Enterprising Non-Profits hosted a free webinar series in 2013 for organizations interested in learning more about social enterprises that promote employment skills. This three-part series has videos and slides available here: <http://contactpoint.ca/listing/introduction-to-social-enterprise-featuring-employment-training-program-models/>