

Evidence Brief

Top Nine Benefits of Social Enterprise Initiatives for Youth

How Did We Compile This Evidence?

We searched in online databases using the keywords “youth,” “young people,” “teenagers,” “adolescents,” “initiatives,” “businesses,” “community,” “social enterprise,” and “benefits.” We looked for articles about what works, what doesn’t, and the benefits for youth.

Summary of Evidence:

Top Nine Benefits of Social Enterprise Initiatives for Youth

The evidence collected from this literature review indicates that social enterprise and other business initiatives are *linked or associated** with bringing about positive change for youth.

1. **Increased Interpersonal/Life Skills:** these skills include open communication, self-confidence, a sense of contribution, public speaking, and social and emotional learning (Amyot & Fairholm Mader, 2014; Ferguson & Islam, 2008; Ferguson & Xie, 2008; Ho & Chan, 2010; O’Donnell et al., 2012; Meyer-Adams, 2016).
2. **Increased Professional/Work Skills:** these skills include leadership, patience, work habits, and professionalism (Amyot & Fairholm Mader, 2014; o’Donnell et al, 2012).
3. **Increased Work Experience:** this includes experience and skills in technology, and other work experience, such as completing job applications (Ho & Chan, 2010; Jordan & Krumnow, 2014; O’Donnell et al., 2012).
4. **Improved Physical Health:** this includes improving youth’s basic needs and wellbeing (Ferguson & Islam, 2008; Ferguson & Xie, 2008).
5. **Improved Relationships:** these include with both peers and family (Ferguson, 2012; O’Donnell et al., 2012).
6. **Increased Civic Engagement:** for example, through political involvement and volunteerism (Jordan & Krumnow, 2014).

7. **Opened Potential Career Paths:** business initiatives created opportunities for youth to learn and uncover future inclinations and potential career paths (O'Donnell et al., 2012).
8. **Improved Academic Success:** youth were more motivated to excel in school, which could lead to improved academic performance and success (O'Donnell et al., 2012).
9. **Higher Educational Aspirations:** this academic success helped youth aspire to attaining higher education or degrees (O'Donnell et al., 2012).

**See more under the “What do we need to know more about?” section.*

Recommendations for Organizations:

The following worked well in the initiatives reviewed to increase the above benefits for youth:

1. Design your program to serve youth already participating in existing programs (Ho et al., 2015; O'Donnell et al., 2012).
2. Align your program with youth interests and relevant career skills, such as technology or impact in community and globally (Ho et al., 2015; O'Donnell et al., 2012).
3. Create a supportive environment through staff and the community, involving positive adult relationships (O'Donnell et al., 2012).
4. Build connections to other sectors or community organizations for a transition to full-time employment (Amyot & Fairholm Mader, 2014; Ho et al., 2015).

What do we need to know more about?

1. More research to prove benefits.

The results of these studies were not necessarily proven (Roy et al., 2014), but defined as “linked” (Amyot & Fairholm Mader, 2014), “significant” (Ho et al., 2015), “suggested,” or “associated” (Jordan & Krumnow, 2014). More research is needed to understand the evidence and impact of social enterprise activities/initiatives and the benefits to youth.

2. More research for benefits within the community.

Connections tied with benefits for youth and the initiatives in communities is rather limited. Most research is tied toward employability outcomes (BC Centre for Employment Excellence, 2017), rather than positive contributions to the community. There is a need for more research in this area (Amyot & Fairholm Mader, 2014; Ho et al., 2015).

References

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