



Youth Employment in Canada: **THE YOUTH INSIGHTS REPORT 2020**

OPPORTUNITY FOR
ALL YOUTH



OPPORTUNITÉS POUR
TOUS LES JEUNES

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SUMMARY

Throughout the summer of 2020, we engaged youth across Canada in a series of events and activities. As an initiative comprised of a group of employers committed to investing in youth facing employment barriers, our goal was to listen and learn from those we are trying to serve. This report summarizes the input, ideas and perceptions youth shared with us and applies them to the employment experience we are working to foster and share with others in the employment system. We heard from youth that they have points of view that they want to share, and they want their questions and concerns addressed. These issues and concerns are what motivated the work of Opportunity For All Youth. And while progress has been made by the coalition, it is important to be reminded that their concerns must continue to inform our work and that there is more work to be done.



MESSAGE FROM OUR LEAD EXECUTIVE

Angela Simo Brown, Lead Executive, Opportunity For All Youth

Dear Reader,



I'm thrilled to share with you our inaugural Youth Insights Report. This report outlines over 20 youth-led insights and recommendations on how to improve the youth employment system in Canada so youth can find early work and get on a path to a hopeful future. At Opportunity For All Youth, our mission is to help create better youth futures by helping young people who face barriers find meaningful work and develop skills and confidence. The need for our work has never been greater.

There are over one million young people in Canada not in school, employment or training and they are falling through the cracks.¹ A shocking one in three youth jobs have disappeared this year due to COVID-19. Right now, there are over 400,000 youth across the country who are actively looking to break into the workforce.² These youth are struggling to get on the path to economic prosperity and are encountering many systemic barriers that are impeding their success.

We have a lot of work to do.

The good news is that youth have important insights and are lending their voice to this work. Using our signature design jam engagement process, youth shared numerous actionable recommendations that will be presented to employers, youth employment agencies and decision-makers who have the ability to prioritize meaningful change. At Opportunity For All Youth, we are already applying these insights and building processes to incorporate the youth voice into our recruiting, hiring and onboarding practices. I am proud of this report and encourage you to share it with anyone you think would benefit from its insights.

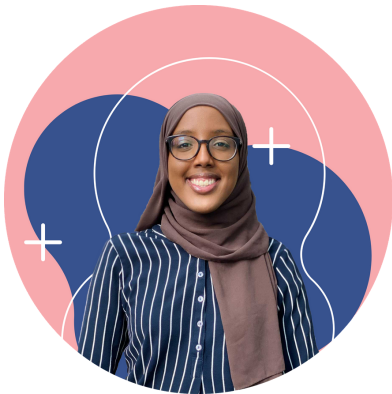
We know what we need to do. Now is the time to support better youth futures by creating an exceptional youth employment system designed by youth for youth.

In hope and optimism,

Angela

MESSAGE FROM OUR LEAD CONTRIBUTOR

“With some of the highest youth unemployment rates in census history, we can’t ignore that the inequality is coded by race and socioeconomic status.”



Habon Ali, Youth Futures Leader, Opportunity For All Youth

Our work with youth this summer has allowed me to engage in the best work of my life. We are currently facing many disruptions: a COVID-19 crisis, a racial justice crisis, and a climate crisis. Youth are on the frontlines—as essential workers, innovating, learning and building better futures. Futures we can’t even begin to imagine.

With some of the highest youth unemployment rates in census history, we can’t ignore that the inequality is coded by race and socioeconomic status.

Working alongside youth across the country this summer was a life-changing experience. Together, we designed an opportunity strategy to create more access points for employment and career growth, and addressed barriers that affect youth every day.

Our work reminds me of a quote by American author, Toni Morrison: *“When you get these jobs you have been so brilliantly trained for, just remember that your real job is that if you are free, you need to free somebody else. If you have some power, then your job is to empower somebody else. This is not just a grab-bag candy game.”*



Introduction

FOREWORD

“The pandemic has only amplified the existing underlying challenges that youth are facing when trying to find and keep meaningful work.”

Youth across Canada are consumed with uncertainty around how they're going to build a prosperous future in the post-COVID-19 economic landscape. As youth in Canada and around the world are reeling from the devastating health effects of the global pandemic, they are also faced with an economic crisis that could permanently affect their lifetime earning potential, career satisfaction, and in turn, their emotional and physical health and well-being.

While CERB and CESB have been critical lifelines for many, COVID-19 and unemployment is disproportionately impacting youth. From February to April 2020, the youth unemployment rate had doubled, from 12 per cent to 24 per cent, and peaked at 29.4 per cent in May.³ Though youth unemployment is beginning to recover with the reopening of businesses, youth still remain furthest from recovery than any other demographic in Canada. As of February 2021, the youth unemployment rate was 17.1 per cent, compared to 8.2 per cent for the general population.⁴

The economic effects of the pandemic have further impacted racialized youth. In August 2020, the unemployment rate for youth not in school who identified as a visible minority was 28.2 per cent, compared to 16.3 per cent for non-visible minority* youth.⁵

The pandemic has only amplified the existing underlying challenges that youth are facing when trying to find and keep meaningful work. Before COVID-19 touched ground in Canada, there were approximately 860,000 youth not in employment, education or training (NEET).⁶ Today, that number has almost doubled,⁷ and yet, employer recruitment needs for early talent roles remain unfulfilled.

Without immediate intervention, the long term effects of youth unemployment can affect their lifetime earning potential.⁸ Also, extended periods of youth unemployment reduces hiring potential by seven per cent in the eyes of employers.⁹ Studies have also shown that youth not in employment or training are at higher risk of suffering from mental health and substance abuse issues.¹⁰

The time for change is now.

If we want our solutions to be effective, especially in today's context, we need to meaningfully include and engage youth. Genuine youth engagement centralizes the youth voice, recognizes their various intersecting identities, and meets youth where they are. This honest inclusion will ensure that the recovery and “build back” is intergenerational, equitable and just.

*The Employment Equity Act defines visible minorities as "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour."

METHODOLOGY

The report opens with our engagements over the summer of 2020, including the ImpactCOVID Youth Summit, #ImpactCOVID webinars, youth design jams (see page 13) and digital hiring activities, while covering two case studies. From there, we highlight the main themes drawn from youth experiences and feedback to create a list of action items to drive meaningful improvements. We conclude the report with future activities in development at Opportunity For All Youth as a

direct response to youth engagement activities and themes. Quantitative data from Statistics Canada, along with various government bodies, local organizations, and others, were also used as evidentiary research to support the themes that emerged from our youth engagement activities. The demographics of the youth engagement activity participants, including age, race and employment status, are reflective of the demographic we aim to support. A full list of sources is available on page 42.





How we engaged youth

youth engagement by the numbers

1

youth summit

7

Design Jams

8

#ImpactCOVID
webinars

7000+

Youth reached through broadcast
events

4

Pilot digital
hiring events

1080

youth engaged through
digital youth activities

7

Career chats with
NPower

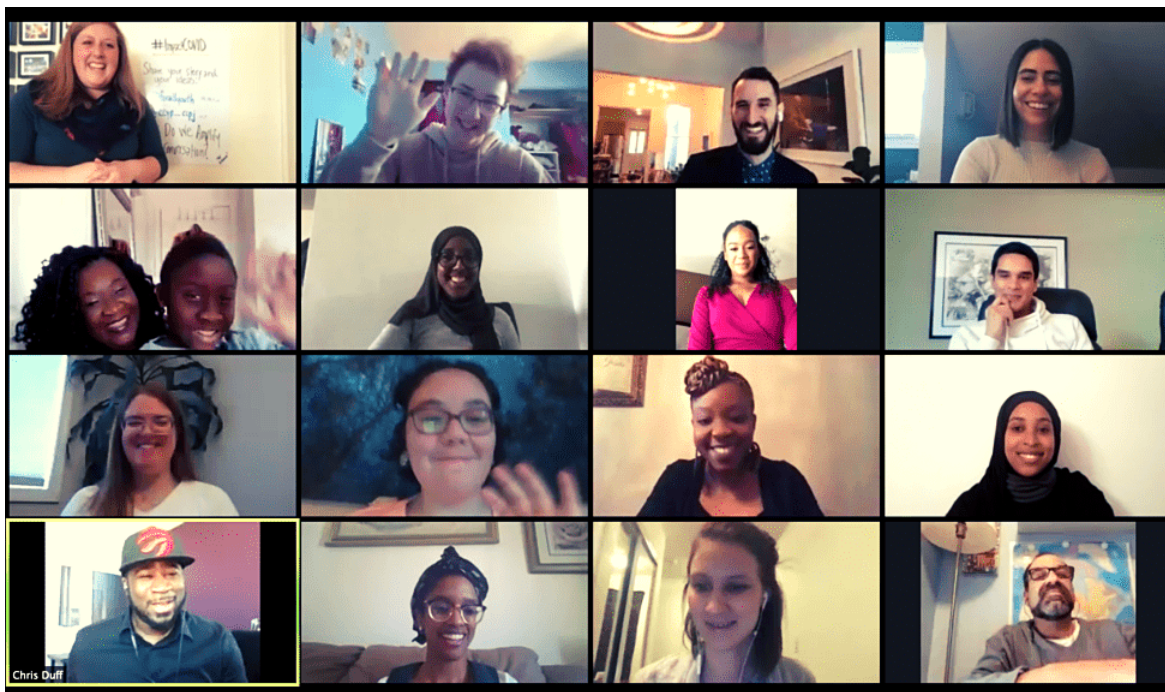


HOW WE ENGAGED YOUTH

1. youth summit

In April 2020, we collaborated with the Canadian Council for Youth Prosperity (CCYP) to organize our first digital youth summit. This summit served as a kick-off event for a series of #ImpactCOVID virtual events, aimed at creating an open forum where youth voices could be amplified in the global pandemic landscape.

We brought together over 100 youth along with representatives from the youth employment sector to talk about the challenges youth are facing in the COVID-19 job market, what supports remain available to them, and what supports are still needed.



HOW WE ENGAGED YOUTH

2. #ImpactCOVID youth webinars

Building on the summit, we continued to host a series of webinars with CCYP and Société de développement social.

Our goal was to create a space for youth to directly ask their questions to employment experts and to explore topics such as mental health, the limits to going digital, and post-COVID strategies for employment.

UN WEBINAIRE DE LA SÉRIE #IMPACTCOVID
LUNDI 25 MAI - DE 11 H À 11 H 45
GRATUIT



CONSEILS CONCRETS
POUR JEUNES
PRO-ACTIFS

Animé par :

PATRICK BIZINDAVYI,
SPÉCIALISTE JUNIOR, RELATIONS
AVEC LES COMMUNAUTÉS,
RADIO-CANADA ONTARIO



IMPACT COVID PRESENTS
EMPLOYMENT VS. EMPLOYABILITY SUMMIT



#ImpactCOVID Webinar Series presents
**HIGHLIGHTING
POTENTIAL:**

TIPS & TRICKS FOR JOB
HUNTING IN A VIRTUAL
WORLD



A conversation
with Jake
Hirsch-Allen
from LinkedIn

SILVER LININGS:
BUILD YOURSELF INTO THE SOCIAL FABRIC
OF A NEW POST-COVID ECONOMY

HOW WE ENGAGED YOUTH

3. youth design jams

We hosted seven jams with an average of seven participants between the ages of 15 and 29. They focused on regions across the country, including Atlantic Canada, Alberta, BC, Quebec and Ontario.

Topics included equity, diversity, inclusion, intergenerational learning, recruitment and geographical variations in the youth employment experience. We spoke with interns at MaRS Discovery District, youth in Atlantic Canada, youth employed at The Source (an Opportunity For All Youth coalition employer), recent high school graduates, and youth connected with the Canadian Council For Youth Prosperity.

What is a design jam?

Design jams bring together a select, representative group for brainstorming sessions over two days where they identify problems affecting their lives and together develop tangible solutions to challenges plaguing the youth employment system.

HOW WE ENGAGED YOUTH

4. career chats with NPower and MaRS

Opportunity For All Youth launched a series of seven career chats in partnership with NPower and MaRS Discovery District (MaRS). Each event welcomed a group of 25-30 participants from NPower and one professional “mentor” from the MaRS IT team who answered questions about finding and keeping jobs in IT, and how to build a successful career in the industry.

The event mentor answered their questions around how to find and retain employment in the industry, as well as tips on how to build a successful career in IT.

NPower Canada is a free program geared towards providing underserved youth with skills-training and connections to career opportunities in the IT industry.

Types of questions asked at the career chats

- What type of talent is crucial for MaRS?
- What do you think is the biggest risk you have taken in your career?
- What advice would you give to your younger self?
- What challenges have you faced during COVID-19
- How's the tech ecosystem going to overcome COVID or any future global threat?

HOW WE ENGAGED YOUTH

5. pilot digital hiring events

The pandemic brought many recruitment challenges, most notably the elimination of in-person interviews. It became critical to identify a new process to support employer recruitment challenges and the result was a digital hiring process that would still meet the needs of employers and work-ready youth by connecting them in a new remote environment.

Over the course of several months, we coordinated four digital hiring activities with The Home Depot Canada. Working closely with a single employer allowed us to refine our process after each activity. As much as possible, we mirrored our signature in-person process, hosting a digital version of our flagship offering, “Coaches Corner” for last minute candidate prep. We also created digital feedback cards to ensure each youth who participated received information on interview outcomes in a timely manner.

“The Home Depot online job event was overwhelming at first seeing all the potential candidates in the chat room. The coordinator was informative regarding what’s to be expected as he sent us through to the interviewer. The interview experience was comfortable and free-flowing due to the receptive approach of the interviewer and overall process.”

- K. Smith, youth candidate and new Home Depot employee



University Avenue



TESTIMONIALS FROM ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES



Nancy Mitchell

"I think peer to peer communication is a great way for youth to share information and to support one another. In the context of employment, peer to peer communication can mean youth sharing and reposting employment opportunities, sharing their experiences in a particular role with an organization or company, and providing mentorship and advice to peers. Peer to peer communication ultimately ensures that young people have access to streamlined, credible, easily-digestible, easily-relatable employment opportunities."



Gurneet Dhami

"Being a student, there's a lot of things you can do in the classroom, but I find that there's very few platforms out there that can lend your voice, ideas and opinions beyond a paper. I felt like the design jam was a really great opportunity to talk about how the employment system could be improved with youth voices and perspectives in mind. It really filled the gap by connecting us to spaces looking for ideas and opinions, like MaRS Discovery District. It really created that space where you feel confident that you can make an impact as a student and youth."



Brian Talegunde

"Opportunity For All Youth and MaRS Discovery District have created this platform that creates a bridge to other MaRS partners, and that can open doors for youth. Sharing ideas with people from different backgrounds, point of views and skill sets gave me a unique opportunity to learn from others. Design jams result in a more impactful solution to the problem you're trying to resolve."



youth insights



Over and over, we've heard from youth that now is a time *of* change, and *for* change.

COVID-19 has disrupted career and personal milestones for youth, and no one is sure what that impact will be.

Amid all the uncertainty, youth are eager to see meaningful change.



YOUTH INSIGHTS

Creating inclusive and supportive spaces

“The pledge to uphold diversity, equity, and inclusion makes us the strongest team possible.”

- Walmart Canada

YOUTH INSIGHTS

Creating inclusive and supportive spaces

“It may not directly be vocalized, but tokenization deeply wounds our personal and professional growth.”

-Naeema Hassan, Youth Innovation Council member

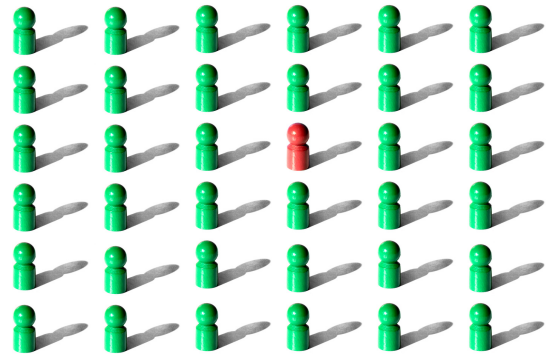
1. Avoid tokenism. Commit to professional development and networking opportunities.

We heard that youth lack connections to professionals in their chosen or aspired field, and are unsure how to network. They see the potential of LinkedIn, but do not always know how to make it work for them.

Youth have also told us that corporate equity, diversity and inclusion practices run the risk of becoming tokenistic if they are not backed up with professional development and networking opportunities.

These networking opportunities must include professionals who represent their respective identity groups so that organic bonds can be created, and so that pathways to diverse hiring can be facilitated.

These organic bonds can help ease the silent pressure on diverse youth to carry the burden of representing the entirety of their community experience and education of their peers, or feeling like a diversity checkmark. It is very hard to flourish with that kind of pressure.



Taking Action

Opportunity For All Youth has started this work by onboarding our first Youth Innovation Council and holding Career Chats with tech professionals at MaRS. We've also piloted a reverse mentoring program with The Coalition of Innovation Leaders Against Racism (CILAR). So far, these programs have been a tremendous success, and we are sharing learnings with our employer coalition and strategic partners.

YOUTH INSIGHTS

Creating inclusive and supportive spaces

2. Create a safe environment for speaking up and act upon youth feedback.

Genuine inclusion needs an environment of continuous growth and learning, assurances that communication and feedback will not be punished, and an equal voice for all employees regardless of level of authority. Further, for youth to feel their voice is truly valued, they need to see that their feedback was actioned or taken seriously.

Taking Action

Employer onboarding at Opportunity For All Youth incorporates training on key skills that employers need to develop when hiring youth facing barriers. These trainings are based on recommendations from the Government of Canada. Skills include empathy, communication, setting clear expectations and providing helpful feedback, and flexibility to allow time to support them on their path to success. We know that we need to do more in this space, and we are currently ideating new tools to ensure a better youth experience and retention rates.

“Youth engagement at its best is comprehensive – it can’t be compartmentalized or wheeled out to suit political purposes. It is a dynamic process that is embedded in an organization’s culture to be responsive to youths’ needs and to push for a better world.”

-The Children and Youth in Challenging Contexts Network

YOUTH INSIGHTS

Creating inclusive and supportive spaces

3. Join youth in their search for social justice.

Social media-fueled youth activism is here to stay. Young people have far more agency than past generations to share their passions on issues they care about and are looking for ways to bring their whole selves to the workplace. Youth want their employers, managers and colleagues to join them in social justice causes. Young people can be an organization's greatest ally if employers celebrate this and support them on issues that matter to them. Suggestions include a youth engagement section in annual reports, or giving to youth-supported causes.

Taking Action

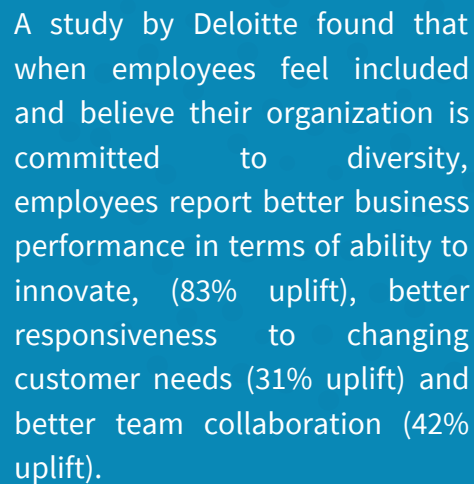
Opportunity For All Youth was started to address systemic barriers that young people face when trying to find employment. The foundation of our work is built upon leveling the playing field for youth who have been marginalized or excluded from opportunities to build a prosperous future. By partnering with our employer coalition members, we give employers an avenue to do this social justice work.

YOUTH INSIGHTS

Creating inclusive and supportive spaces

4. Do your research first.

Youth expect managers and leaders to do the important work of unlearning harmful practices and stereotypes, before asking people from marginalized communities to do it for them. When they do engage with youth from these communities, it's important to be mindful of the emotional labour and time investment that is expected. To meaningfully participate in engagement activities, youth need to be compensated for their time, they need flexibility on meeting times, and they need deliverables to be adjusted accordingly.



A study by Deloitte found that when employees feel included and believe their organization is committed to diversity, employees report better business performance in terms of ability to innovate, (83% uplift), better responsiveness to changing customer needs (31% uplift) and better team collaboration (42% uplift).

Taking Action

Opportunity For All Youth leads this work through our signature design jam process, where youth facing barriers share their personal experiences within the youth employment system. We also facilitate exercises to co-create solutions to these barriers. Our council and design jam participants are compensated for their time that meets minimum wage standards. We then share these learnings with our employer partners through workshops, symposiums and now, through our inaugural Youth Report. Our Youth Innovation Council will also be leading this work.

YOUTH INSIGHTS

Breaking down barriers: key considerations

“Our relationship with Opportunity For All Youth has been monumental in uncovering unconscious biases from a hiring and onboarding perspective.”

-Tiffany Donaldson, Project Manager, Employee Training, The Source.

breaking down barriers: key considerations

Inclusion

Consider additional training and a needs assessment on incorporating a youth perspective in HR and Diversity and Inclusion strategies.

Recognition

Recognize and reward youth for their work. This will help them along their skills growth journey and will serve as an asset to their professional portfolio.

Accessibility

Have a conversation with youth about what they hope to gain during their tenure. This may help with confusion in navigating structures within the workplace. Offer upskilling and networking opportunities, regardless of previous work experience.

Outreach

Consider using offline channels to reach youth! Local youth organizations, schools, and community leaders have direct touchpoints with youth. Our model of reaching youth through local community service providers has been effective.

Honesty

Conduct a robust assessment of your organization before you brand it as inclusive. Ensure that your inclusion strategy is public, so that external parties can review it.

YOUTH INSIGHTS

Breaking down barriers: key considerations

5. Less expectations, more realism.

Most youth we talked to felt that employers do not have realistic application requirements for early-talent work. Entry-level jobs, by definition, should not require prior experience. Youth urge employers to focus on skills development, skills laddering and creating pathways for growth for young talent rather than recruiting youth with more experience. This is particularly important if youth who don't hold a diploma or degree, or who don't have work experience are ever to have a fighting chance for meaningful employment.

Taking Action

Opportunity For All Youth is working with employers to remove the experience barrier that many youth face in getting hired. So far, we've worked with employers to eliminate the requirements such as resumes and prior work experience and instead focused on identifying key transferable skills needed to succeed in an early-talent role. Many youth we work with have faced broader systemic barriers to employment and do not have early access to work experience. We work with employers to retrain their interviewing ear to listen for the skills developed in challenging life situations and how these building-block skills can serve as valuable assets to their organizations.

YOUTH INSIGHTS

Breaking down barriers: key considerations

6. Avoid HR bias and ghosting.

Bias is insidious. Racial discrimination often starts as soon as otherwise well-meaning recruiters have difficulty reading or spelling a non-European name on CVs. Particularly demotivating for youth is getting ghosted after applying, or even interviewing, for a job. Youth want to hear from recruiters whether they were successful, and if not, what they can do differently for next time. Recruiters hold tremendous power and influence in not only giving someone a start at a career, but in making youth feel like they even deserve one.

“When I was starting out to find work in the summer of Grade 9, I was told there were “thousands” of jobs available on the Ontario Summer Jobs Portal. I remember applying for ten and getting zero response. It made me feel so discouraged and as if I’ve been lied to.”

-Kelly Xu, Youth Innovation Council member

Taking Action

Ghosting hurts, and it can be internalized as personal or bias playing out. This is a key reason we insist on guaranteed feedback from interviews and youth are always encouraged to return in the future for another interview. We ensure that the interview experience is positive, regardless of the outcome, by providing feedback for learning and development.

YOUTH INSIGHTS

Breaking down barriers: key considerations

7. Easier job navigation.

Youth voiced their concerns around navigating their job search. Searching for a job online can be akin to a maze of promising opportunities that lead nowhere. Inactive postings across multiple recruitment websites, such as Indeed, LinkedIn and Monster Jobs for example, are demotivating. Once active job listings are identified, it's often just as difficult to identify whether the opportunity is youth friendly (e.g. early talent roles, flexible hours for students, etc.) Jobs tagged as “youth friendly” would be a terrific way to help youth find the right match.

Taking Action

Much of the hiring Opportunity For All Youth has been in conjunction with Community Service Providers (CSPs) to circumvent frustrating and inefficient online job searches. In partnership with the CSPs, we've been doing some groundwork with our active employer partners to make job postings more youth-friendly, and map out processes and address challenges in real-time.



YOUTH INSIGHTS

Breaking down barriers: key considerations

8. Essential work must be safe work.

We heard that youth have real anxiety around working in essential jobs, and are often not aware of the safety measures taken by employers to ensure they are protected from COVID-19. Youth also saw inconsistencies in the application of safety protocols, and were by and large unaware of the specific safety protocols undertaken by employers, leading to further hesitation in entering the workforce.

Taking Action

At the onset of recruitment for essential workers during COVID-19, we emphasize our interview training to how the respective employer will keep them safe. Recruitment messaging around safety was also expanded through community service providers to also reach family members in various languages, enabling them to support youth in employment decisions.



YOUTH INSIGHTS

Helping youth find their employment path



Photo by Jacob Lund from Noun Project

YOUTH INSIGHTS

Helping youth find their employment path

9. Employers and schools should find new ways to work together.

Co-op opportunities are wonderful ways to gain experience and contacts, but placements are often limited. Youth encourage employers to reach out directly to schools and offer opportunities for hands-on learning and experience through part-time work. At the same time though, it can be difficult to balance school and work, and employers are asked to allow for flexible schedules to accommodate life and school responsibilities.

Taking Action

Opportunity For All Youth advocates for closer connections between employers and schools for youth looking to find employment. We are currently ideating strategic pathways to connect employers and high school students through student micro-influencers. Right now, our focus remains on reaching youth facing barriers who are currently not in the school system.



YOUTH INSIGHTS

Helping youth find their employment path

10. Have authentic Diversity, Equity and Inclusion policies and culture.

The youth population in Canada, particularly those that are marginalized, bring diversity into the workplace. A robust hiring strategy for youth facing barriers, should be incorporated into every Diversity, Equity and Inclusion strategy. There also needs to be a mechanism for accountability and a way to amplify every voice in the organization. Progressive human resources teams can mitigate power structures by championing meaningful equity, diversity and inclusion practices, remaining transparent, and soliciting outside community and professional expertise in those activities.

Taking Action

Opportunity For All Youth is proud to partner with employers that are dedicated to improving the way they hire in their Diversity and Inclusion strategy. The Source, a subsidiary of Bell Media, is a great example of this. The Source is a member of the Opportunity For All Youth executive committee. The Source and Bell Media have begun this work by looking at who sits in the decision-making seats for hiring and what those employees look like. They are actively improving their acquisition funnels and qualification requirements, focusing on bringing on more female employees. From there, they plan to take that model and apply it to other groups that have been historically marginalized, including Black, Indigenous Peoples and people of colour, and people with disabilities.



case studies

CASE STUDIES

Case Study 1: The Source Design Jam

Our design jam with The Source allowed eight youth participants and seven senior employees to discuss brand awareness, their impressions of who a typical employee might be, the responsibilities of a tech sales associate, and the challenges youth face in applying and working in tech retail sales. The jam resulted in a large volume of ideas.



Key Insights:

We saw a large convergence in thinking from all groups, with a high focus on telling authentic stories of youth within the brand. Youth want to see brands that represent young and diverse talent, align with their personality, and offer a safe working environment.

“In the brainstorming and team-building exercises, I enjoyed coming up with creative ideas on how to tackle challenges in the hiring process with our group. The most eye-opening topic for me was the gender disparity and representation of minority communities in the tech space. Along with that came extremely insightful takes on how we can improve upon this and build a foundation for a more inclusive and diverse millennial workforce.”

– Samir H., Youth Design Jam participant

CASE STUDIES

Case Study 2: Group Digital Interviews

With increased risks associated with traditional in-person interviews due to COVID-19, many companies are pursuing digital interviewing methods.

Opportunity For All Youth partnered with the Canadian Council for Youth Prosperity to pilot a digital group interview method for their Youth Advisory Council.

Elements of the digital interview:

- Two 90-minute sessions held over Zoom using Google Jamboards.
- Tech facilitator on-hand for support.
- Interviewees welcomed into main Zoom room and given instructional walk-through.
- After introductions, interviewees were split into groups of five into breakout rooms.
- Activities in breakout rooms were used to assess the following skills: teamwork, creativity, ability to work under pressure and subject matter expertise.
- Following activities, candidates were brought back into the main room where they could ask questions.
- From there, interviewers communicated a hiring timeline and interviewees were assigned a follow-up activity which was to upload a video to share why they wanted to the role and how it aligned with their goals.



Key Insights:

Youth have told us that this method captures a good balance between a professional interview process and relaxed environment. Instead of putting young people under the spotlight to demonstrate their skills, the gamification allows evaluators to understand who they are instead of limiting their capabilities in a traditional one-on-one interview framework. Furthermore, the use of free digital tools breaks down so many access barriers such as transportation that requires a time and money commitment.



what next?

WHAT NEXT?

Youth Opportunity Strategy

Building on our actions, along with the youth engagements and insights, Opportunity For All Youth has developed a three-pronged youth opportunity strategy. The goal is to build social capital, opportunity, and access to the innovation economy for BIPOC youth (Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour) and youth facing barriers.

This strategy includes the creation of the inaugural MaRS Discovery District Youth Innovation Council, a unique mentorship and reverse-mentorship program with CILAR (Coalition of Innovation Leaders Against Racism), and an innovative digital platform that provides accessible opportunities for youth to acquire and develop key skills to find and keep employment. We'll also be exploring partnerships with similar organizations to bring our Career Chat platform to youth looking to build a career in other fields.

We'll be walking the talk.

The Youth Innovation Council members are being paid fairly for their time. The Council will apply a youth lens to the challenges and opportunities in the youth employment sector in Canada. Their valuable insights will be collected and shared with all stakeholders in the youth development workforce system in Canada to drive positive change.

A commitment to understanding and advancing solutions to address the digital divide

The digital divide is the uneven distribution of access to information and communication technology. It is rooted in income equality. Issues around the digital divide include the high cost of access, connectivity gaps, and digital literacy. Opportunity For All Youth is working to create a standard of best practices to close the divide between youth with limited access to technology and the employment opportunities that require it. We will be collaborating with youth and a coalition of strategic partners in the youth employment space. **We invite all youth, employers and youth-focused organizations across Canada to join us.**



conclusion

CONCLUSION



With a growing cohort of over one million youth in Canada not in school, training or work, the time for meaningful systems change is now.

The pandemic has amplified the barriers to economic prosperity that are disproportionately affecting vulnerable and marginalized youth. And without immediate action, the economic effect can leave a lifetime scar on a young person's life.

We know there's a lot of work to do.

Opportunity For All Youth is committed to doing this work, and we know that we cannot do it alone. Together, with our powerful employer coalition and community service provider partners, we are dedicated to helping youth in Canada who face barriers build skills and confidence so they can embark on a life path to growth and opportunity through meaningful work.

We are always looking for more employer partners who want to hire youth. Contact us today at info@opportunityforall youth.ca to learn the many benefits of being an employer coalition member.



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