

Building Bridges: Connecting Youth Skills to the Future of Work

Building youth skills pathways through
community engagement

**YOUTHFUL
CITIES**

**TAMARACK
INSTITUTE**

Canada



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the second report issued as part of the DEVLab project, a collaborative initiative between Youthful Cities and the Tamarack Institute, supported by funding in part from the Government of Canada's National Essential Skills Initiative program. Building on the first report, it synthesizes insights and recommendations derived from summits, and community engagements. The DEVLab project aims to enhance youth workforce development, address systemic barriers, and co-create actionable solutions to empower young people in urban centres across Canada.

Key Takeaways

1. Barriers to Employment and Education

- Youth across Canada face systemic challenges such as affordability, workplace accessibility, mental health stigma, and digital inequities.
- Marginalized groups, including Indigenous, Black, and newcomer youth, face additional barriers like fragmented support systems and lack of credential recognition.

2. Skills Development Pathways

- DEVlab identified pathways to address workforce needs and youth aspirations, emphasizing the importance of equipping young people with skills that align with current and future employment demands:
- Digital and technological literacy pathway: from foundational digital skills to advanced competencies in areas like AI, coding, and data analysis.
- Entrepreneurship and innovation pathway: focused on fostering business acumen, creativity, and leadership for youth-driven enterprises.
- Green economy pathway: building sustainability-focused skills to prepare for careers in renewable energy and environmental industries.
- Work-integrated learning pathway: bridging education and employment through co-ops, internships, and experiential learning opportunities.
- Trade skills and workforce development pathway: supporting career readiness in high-demand sectors through certifications, apprenticeships, and mentorship.

3. Localized Solutions for Urban Challenges

- *Vancouver*: youth prioritized affordability and green economy skills, proposing initiatives like climate resilience training and affordable housing solutions.
- *Toronto*: youth focused on financial literacy, equity in employment, and digital skills training to bridge gaps for marginalized groups.
- *Calgary*: youth emphasized entrepreneurship, adaptability, and innovative urban design to support youth.
- *Montréal*: youth highlighted workplace diversity, bilingual inclusion, and mentorship as pathways to equitable employment.
- *Moncton, Yellowknife, and Whitehorse*: youth addressed localized career pathways, mental health support, and integration of Indigenous knowledge into youth programs.

4. Proposed Actionable Pathways

- Establish integrated youth hubs for education, mental health, and employment services.
- Promote equity-focused hiring practices and experiential learning opportunities.
- Invest in sustainable urban infrastructure, including affordable housing and reliable public transit.

The DEVlab findings underscore the need for inclusive, collaborative strategies that align urban policies, educational frameworks, and employment ecosystems with youth aspirations. Addressing systemic barriers and fostering skills development will enable Canadian cities to empower young people, drive innovation, and ensure equitable urban growth for future generations.

INTRODUCTION

This report is the second part of an ongoing series under the DEVLab project, building on the foundational work presented in the first part. The earlier report laid the groundwork by highlighting systemic barriers young people face in accessing education and employment in urban centres across Canada. This follow-up dives deeper, focusing on actionable insights and solutions shaped by youth-led discussions and collaborative community engagements.

Part One explored the What and Why behind the challenges. Part Two transitions into the How, presenting practical steps to bridge gaps and create opportunities for youth skills development pathways. By drawing on the voices of youth and allies from a diverse set of cities, both geographically and in size, this report showcases the diversity of needs and aspirations across Canada. It examines how localized solutions can address complex urban challenges, underscoring the significance of tailoring interventions to community-specific needs while fostering a national vision of inclusion and innovation. Each city brings its unique challenges—whether it's affordability, accessibility, or skills mismatches. The urban environments explored in the DEVLab project are assessed not only through opportunities for education, learning, skills development, and employment but also by the livability factors that directly and indirectly shape youth work outcomes in cities. The challenges and solutions detailed in this second report are greatly informed by the lived, academic, and professional experiences of local youth in participating cities.

This report is more than a continuation; it's a conversation. It reflects the lessons learned to date and sets the stage for collaboration between youth, communities, and policymakers. By focusing on solutions, Part Two is a call to action to everyone invested in empowering the next generation of changemakers.





WHAT DID WE DO?

Overview of summits and community events

We provide a brief summary of summits and community events focused on urban work and youth skills pathways in Canadian cities. Using the ABCD model as a framework, we highlight the structure of each event, the key challenges identified, and the potential solutions discussed. We emphasize the essential skills development pathways drawn from discussions across the eight communities involved.

In total, there were nine summits—three in Montréal, two in Toronto, and one each in Calgary, Moncton, Vancouver, and Yellowknife—as well as four community events (one in Vancouver, two in Calgary, and one in Whitehorse), along with four launches of the Urban Work Index 2024. These engagements aimed to foster collaboration, drive actionable insights, and promote youth-friendly, inclusive urban solutions. They provided platforms for meaningful dialogue, community-building, and the co-creation of innovative solutions.

The ABCD Model

Our summits followed the ABCD Model (our version of the theory of change), which sets a structured pathway from understanding the problem to planning actionable solutions:

- **A: Assess (*Where Are We At?*):** Youth examine urban challenges from their lived experiences, focusing on key issues like education and skills, affordability, and equitable employment pathways. This assessment aims to highlight the disparities in current urban conditions and the need for systemic change to better support youth and communities.
- **B: Build (*Where Do We Want to Be?*):** Participants envision an ideal future where urban work and youth development are at the forefront, emphasizing a city that prioritizes sustainable transit, affordable living, and youth-driven economic opportunities. The aim is to outline a vision for the next two, five, and ten years ahead.
- **C: Create (*What Do We Need to Create?*):** Collaborative brainstorming sessions to identify the tools, solutions, and partnerships needed to overcome current challenges in order to achieve future aspirations. This includes innovative approaches to creating accessible, green, and resilient urban spaces, as well as pathways to stable, high-quality youth employment.



- *D: Deliver (How Do We Deliver It?):* Youth, with the guidance of mentors, prepare actionable data-driven solutions that could be implemented in their communities. These solutions are refined to ensure long-term impact, community ownership, and scalability.

This framework guided discussions, informed solution brainstorming, and helped align diverse Collaborators towards common goals around youth skills and workforce development, and livability within cities.

Youth Summits: challenges, solutions and opportunities

Youthful Cities summits enabled young people to address critical urban challenges by fostering collaboration, mentorship, and innovative thinking. These efforts brought youth together with community leaders and mentors to explore pressing local issues, envision potential futures, and develop actionable solutions. Through workshops, discussions, and creative sessions, participants built skills, enhanced leadership, and gained practical tools to drive meaningful change. By addressing systemic barriers and promoting inclusivity, these summits equipped youth to contribute to a more inclusive and accessible future workforce in Canadian cities. The section below provides an overview of the nine summits, followed by challenges discussed and proposed solutions identified. Challenges and proposed solutions reoccurring in multiple cities are identified accordingly.





Urban Work Summit Vancouver (National Summit)

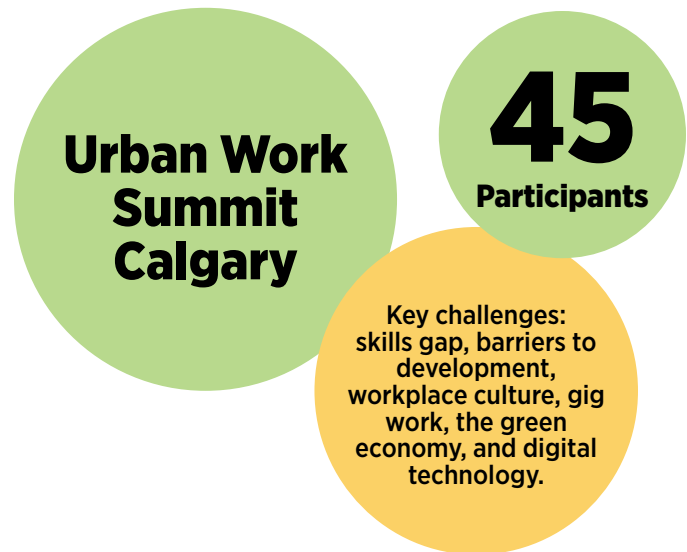
Location: Morris J Wosk Centre for Dialogue at Simon Fraser University, Vancouver

Participants: 60 youth (30 local + 30 national) and 16 community partners

In the 2024 Urban Work Index, **Vancouver ranks second among Canadian cities for youth education, employment, and job opportunities, supported by career programs and 91 Black-serving and 59 Indigenous-serving organizations.** However, gaps in aligning education with local job markets leave some youth without clear career paths.

The national summit enabled participants to delve deeply into multifaceted challenges such as housing affordability and availability, equitable digital access, essential skills for employability, mental health support, and the complexities of transitioning to a green economy. Solutions revolved around addressing systemic barriers and advocating for more inclusive practices in the evolving workforce.

The four-day event included virtual sessions, workshops, guest speakers, and networking activities to connect youth from diverse communities.



Urban Work Summit Calgary

Location: Open Learning Lab, LearningCity Collective, Bow Valley Square, Calgary

Participants: 35 youth and 10 community partners

Calgary's youthful population is a valuable asset but faces significant challenges as the city evolves. **Despite a strong workforce entry-to-exit ratio of 95:100, barriers to youth employment persist. Calgary ranks 28th among Canada's 30 largest cities for its gender wage gap, reflecting workforce inequities.** Housing affordability is another concern, with many households spending over 30% of their income on shelter and younger residents struggling to bridge after-tax income with rising home prices. While Calgary's entrepreneurial ecosystem shows potential, only 6% of 2022 startup funding went to pre-seed and seed stages, limiting opportunities for youth-led ventures. These challenges, coupled with the need to address racialized disparities as Canada's racialized youth population is set to double in the next decade, highlight the need for a more inclusive and supportive environment for young residents.

The summit engaged youth in exploring Calgary's urban work ecosystem, addressing the skills gap, barriers to development, workplace culture, gig work, the green economy, and digital technology. Over two days, participants shared experiences on affordability, livability, and entrepreneurship, proposing solutions to improve the work ecosystem. These ideas were later presented for potential funding at a March 2024 pitch



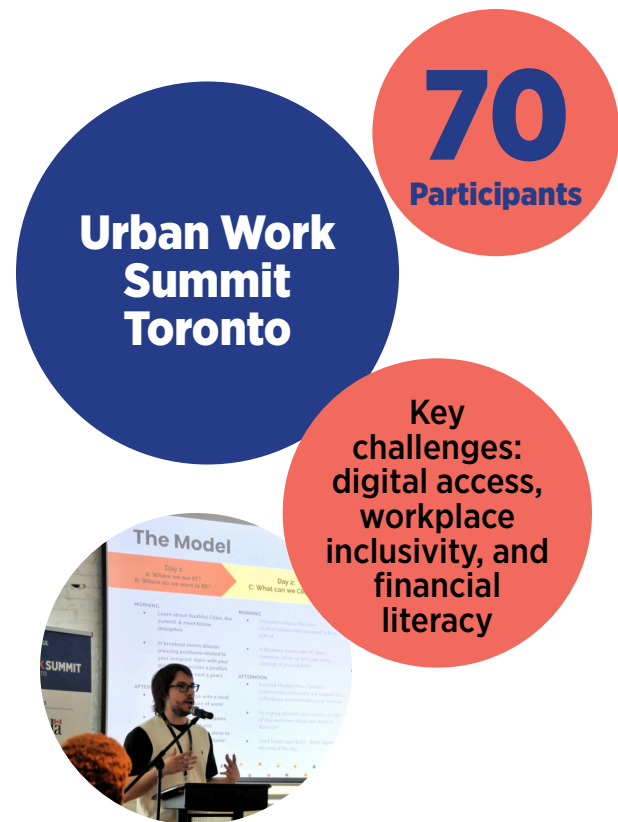
Urban Work Summit Montréal (French)

Location: George Vanier Community Centre on Workman Street, Montréal

Participants: 35 youth and 25 community partners

The Summit tackled key challenges in youth employment, emphasizing accessibility, mental health, digital skills, and affordability. **Montréal ranked 1st in Good Youth Jobs and 3rd in Education & Skills in the 2024 Urban Work Index but faces challenges with workplace diversity, affordability, and mental health support.** The city's mix of francophone and English-speaking youth further complicates workforce integration.

Over two days, participants co-designed actionable projects, which were later refined and pitched. Four initiatives received funding to improve digital literacy and mental health resources. The Summit underscored the importance of aligning skills development with Montréal's economy, advocating for flexible work policies, inclusive hiring practices, and community-



Urban Work Summit Toronto

Location: Centre for Social Innovation (CSI Spadina), Toronto

Participants: 50 youth, and 20 industry professionals, and community leaders

Key employment challenges, including digital access, workplace inclusivity, and financial literacy, were addressed. **Insights from the 2024 Urban Work Index highlight Toronto's strengths in Education & Skills (1st) and Digital Access (1st) but reveal ongoing issues with affordability, inclusivity, and skills mismatches.** These barriers often prevent youth from fully participating in the workforce, particularly in a city with a high cost of living. The summit emphasized collaborative approaches through innovative mental and physical mapping activities, enabling youth to visualize barriers and co-design actionable solutions. These initiatives focused on improving financial literacy, providing mentorship opportunities, and enhancing access to digital tools. The event underscored the importance of fostering equitable employment pathways by tackling systemic challenges and empowering youth to navigate Toronto's evolving job market effectively.



Urban Work Summit Montréal (English)

Location: Carrefour Jeunesse-emploi Montréal, Suite 602, Montréal

Participants: 20 youth and 10 community partners

The summit focused on employment challenges faced by English-speaking youth. **It examined systemic issues such as limited access to stable, high-quality jobs and the misalignment between educational programs and workforce demands.** Discussions revolved around skills development, inclusive hiring, and the value of flexible work policies. Proposed solutions included networking cafés, advocating for adaptable work environments, and enhancing collaboration between employers and youth. The summit highlighted the importance of targeted initiatives to bridge employability gaps and foster a more inclusive, equitable, and dynamic workforce in Montréal's evolving urban landscape.



Moncton Youth & Ally Action Summit

Location: Community Hub on Joyce

Participants: 41 (16 adults and 25 youth)

In the Urban Work Index 2024, Moncton ranks 29th among Canadian cities, underscoring significant challenges for its youth population. **While the city performs well in youth employment, with a high percentage of employed individuals aged 15-29 and strong career services like job boards and co-op programs, it struggles in critical areas such as transportation, diversity, and digital access.** Moncton's net gain in youth population through interprovincial migration from 2015 to 2022 highlights its appeal as an employment hub, but its potential is constrained by limited public transit, inadequate digital connectivity, and a lack of inclusivity.

The Summit tackled these issues by addressing gaps in education and employment access and the need for enhanced mental wellness programs. By convening youth and community leaders, the event fostered dialogue and collaboration to develop actionable solutions, such as integrated youth support hubs and improved data-sharing initiatives. These efforts aim to strengthen youth engagement and create a more inclusive and supportive environment for young residents in Moncton.



Yellowknife Youth Action Summit

Location: Tree of Peace Friendship Centre & Homebase Yellowknife

Participants: 20 youth, 12 service providers and community partners

According to the Urban Work Index 2024, Yellowknife faces significant obstacles in fostering an optimal environment for youth education and employment. **Although the city boasts a high employment rate of 78.3%, access to "good youth jobs" that provide stability and growth opportunities remains limited.** Education pathways, while effective in some areas, often fail to align with the demands of the local labor market, leaving many young people without clear career trajectories. These challenges are compounded by the high cost of living, particularly in housing, which intensifies financial pressures and hinders youth from prioritizing education and career advancement. Addressing these issues will require targeted investments in youth employment programs, expanded access to affordable education, and strategies to alleviate financial barriers for young residents.

The Yellowknife Fall Gathering, held over two days, aimed to tackle these unique challenges while exploring opportunities for youth in the region. The event featured a Community Partner Capacity Building Session on September 20, followed by the Youth Action Summit on September 21. Discussions focused on youth leadership development, career awareness, land-based skills, and bridging the disconnect between education, skills development, and employment. Co-sponsored by the Tree of Peace Friendship Centre, Homebase Yellowknife, the Foster Family Coalition of the Northwest Territories,

and Bayanihan Collective Solutions, the gathering emphasized collaboration and actionable solutions to empower Yellowknife's youth and build a more inclusive and supportive community.



Transit and Liveability Youth Summit Montréal - the 15 minute city (TLYS)

Location: Musée Emile Berliner, St. Henri, Montréal

Participants: 22 youth participants

The Summit explored the critical role of public transit in shaping educational and employment opportunities for youth. **The cost of living and commute times can disproportionately impact youth, hindering their ability to access education and quality employment opportunities.** The event began with a neighborhood walking tour from Place St-Henri metro station to the museum, led by Youthful Cities staff. Participants identified gaps in transit options and barriers to mobility, aligning personal experiences with data insights. This was followed by a data analysis session that highlighted affordability concerns and the impact of transit on employment access. A mental mapping exercise, facilitated by [Dr. Leslie Toure Kapo](#), allowed participants to visualize these issues and co-create innovative solutions. The summit emphasized the need for more affordable transit options and efficient networks to ensure Montréal's youth can fully engage in education, employment, and urban life.



Financial Literacy Summit (Toronto)

Location: CSI Spadina, Toronto and Zoom (Pre-Summit)

Participants: 15 youth (Virtual pre-summit session) and 10 youth (in-person)

The summit addressed critical challenges faced by marginalized youth, including unaffordable housing, low wages, and limited access to financial education. Insights from the Urban Work Index 2024 highlight that **while Toronto scores well in City Economy (1st), youth still face systemic financial barriers due to high living costs and wage gaps.** The summit underscored the disconnect between traditional financial education and the realities of youth navigating precarious employment and housing markets. Discussions focused on financial accessibility, bridging knowledge gaps, and promoting employment stability. Through interactive workshops and discussions, participants developed practical financial skills, such as budgeting and saving strategies, while exploring pathways toward financial independence. The summit emphasized the need for tailored financial education that reflects youth experiences, advocating for policies that support wage growth, affordable housing, and accessible financial resources to foster long-term financial stability in marginalized communities.

Community engagement events

Multiple community engagement events in each of the cities engaged young people after the completion of the major summits. The community events focused on more defined themes that emerged from DEVLab research and topics that both indirectly and directly impact workability, employment and livability for young people in cities. A total of four events engaged youth and community partners through various creative formats.



Whitehorse Virtual Youth Community Gathering

Location: Virtual via Zoom

Participants: 10 (3 adults, 7 youth)

As per the Urban Work Index 2024, Whitehorse grapples with critical challenges for youth, particularly in employment, education, mental wellness, and community safety. **While Whitehorse shows a youth employment rate of 72.5%, many jobs lack stability and growth potential.** Furthermore, mental health services and safe communal spaces are limited, especially in remote areas. **According to data collected from Whitehorse, 63% of youth express difficulty in accessing education pathways that lead to clear career trajectories.** These factors, compounded by the high cost of living and limited infrastructure, hinder youth from achieving economic and personal well-being.

The Community Gathering aimed to address these interconnected issues by bringing together youth and

community partners. It is important to note that the Whitehorse Virtual Youth Community Gathering unfolded within the context of a Territorial Youth Strategy (TYS) which was formally endorsed in 2024. The YYS is a collaborative effort between many diverse Collaborators throughout the Yukon including young people, youth-serving organizations, businesses, community members, and all levels of government and serves as a guiding document for decision-makers at all levels and in all sectors. The event provided a platform to share UWI2024 data and foster dialogues about its links to the priorities identified in the Territorial Youth Strategy and reinforce opportunities for youth and adult allies to collaborate on actionable solutions. There was a high degree of synergy between the data shared and YYS priorities, including mental wellness, employment pathways, and the need to create safer, supportive environments for youth.



Vancouver Green Futures Event

Location: 315 Main Street, Vancouver(in- person)

Participants: 21 youth, and 3 community partners

Youth for Sustainable Careers is a community-focused initiative designed to empower young people in Vancouver with the resources, knowledge, and connections needed to build careers in the green economy. The event tackled key challenges faced by youth interested in sustainability, such as gaps in information, limited networking opportunities, and a lack of hands-on experience.



Workplace Vibes

Location: WeWork, Downtown Calgary

Participants: 12 youth, 5 adults, and 3 community partners

The event brought together young people, professionals, and partners to provide initial data insights into the DEVlab project and bring young people into an engaging discussion around workplace culture, employment challenges, and barriers faced by underrepresented youth. The three hour event provided a data shareback session, a presentation from TalentEDyyc on work integrated learning opportunities in Calgary, and a round table discussion with the youth on the challenges they face in employment and where they would like the city to be in the future.



Kensington Tour + Zine Making Workshop

Location: Kensington Community Tour + Vibrant Communities of Calgary Office

Participants: 12 youth, 6 professionals, and 3 community partners

The event took a unique approach to engaging youth by combining the topics of employment and placemaking. Participants toured a diverse and vibrant Calgary community alongside urban planning and engagement professionals, followed by a discussion and presentation at the Vibrant Communities Calgary office. Youth shared challenges and proposed solutions at the intersection of city design and employment.

Identified challenges



Workplace accessibility – *Montréal, Toronto, Calgary, Vancouver, Moncton, Yellowknife, Whitehorse*

Youth face significant barriers to accessing workplaces that are both physically and economically accessible. These include a lack of reliable transportation, inadequate workplace accommodations for physical or mental health needs, and limited job opportunities within their own communities. High commuting costs, especially in cities with underdeveloped transit systems, exacerbate these challenges. These obstacles disproportionately affect youth in low-income and rural areas, severely limiting their access to stable employment opportunities.



Affordable work opportunities – *Montréal, Toronto, Calgary, Vancouver*

Youth struggle to find jobs that provide wages sufficient to meet the rising costs of living, such as housing, tuition, and transportation. "Affordable work" refers to positions offering adequate income without excessive unpaid internships or long commutes. The lack of entry-level jobs that lead to career progression compounds this issue, leaving many youth trapped in low-paying roles with limited growth potential.



Barriers to diversity, equity, and inclusion – *Montréal, Toronto, Vancouver, Calgary*

Systemic discrimination and inequitable hiring practices continue to marginalize BIPOC youth, women, and newcomers. Many workplaces fail to reflect diverse leadership, limiting mentorship opportunities and perpetuating exclusion. Biases in recruitment and promotion practices create barriers to upward mobility. Meaningful inclusion requires more than quotas—it demands structural changes such as equity-focused policies, inclusive workplace cultures, and community outreach to build diverse talent pipelines.



Mismatch of employers and youth expectations – *Montréal, Vancouver, Toronto*

Employers often prioritize immediate productivity, undervaluing the importance of mentorship and career development for young employees. Youth, in contrast, seek clarity in job roles, opportunities for growth, and workplaces that align with their values. This disconnect results in high turnover rates and dissatisfaction. Misaligned expectations also arise from traditional recruitment processes that fail to clearly communicate job demands or accommodate youth-driven aspirations like work-life balance and skills development.



Networking barriers – Montréal, Toronto, Calgary

Building professional connections is a significant challenge for youth, particularly those from non-business or underrepresented backgrounds. The lack of accessible networking opportunities prevents youth from forming relationships necessary for career advancement. This is compounded by the absence of mentorship programs focused on early-career guidance. Creating informal networking spaces and platforms that connect youth with professionals can foster career growth and inclusion.



Skill development gaps – Montréal, Toronto, Calgary

Youth frequently report that educational institutions fail to equip them with the practical skills needed in today's job market, including resume writing, interviewing, and role-specific technical skills. Many students also lack exposure to new technologies and workplace dynamics, leaving them unprepared for competitive labour markets. Expanding access to industry-specific training and experiential learning opportunities, such as apprenticeships, can bridge this gap.



Digital and educational inequities – *Montréal, Toronto, Yellowknife, Calgary*

Limited access to reliable internet, devices, and technology education disproportionately affects youth in underserved neighborhoods and rural areas. These inequities prevent full participation in remote work, online learning, and tech-driven industries. Schools often lack the funding to integrate technology into curricula, further disadvantage students from low-income families. Collaborative efforts between governments, educational institutions, and tech companies are essential to reduce this digital divide.



Career pathways and experiential learning – *Calgary, Yellowknife*

High competition, financial barriers, and systemic inequities limit youth access to internships, co-ops, and mentorship programs. Many of these opportunities are unpaid, excluding those who cannot afford to work without compensation. International students face additional challenges, such as visa restrictions and a lack of networks. Increasing the availability of paid experiential learning programs and fostering partnerships between industries and educational institutions can create equitable career pathways.



Financial stress and cost of living – *Montréal, Toronto, Calgary, Vancouver*

The rising costs of housing, food, tuition, and transportation create overwhelming financial pressures for youth. Many are forced to work multiple jobs while pursuing education, leading to burnout and limiting career development. This cycle perpetuates economic disparities, particularly for those from marginalized backgrounds. Initiatives such as subsidized housing, tuition freezes, and financial literacy programs are critical to alleviating these stressors and fostering upward mobility.



Infrastructure inefficiencies – *Montréal, Vancouver, Calgary, Moncton, Yellowknife, Whitehorse*

Inefficient public transit, poorly maintained urban spaces, and rising housing costs make it difficult for youth to navigate cities and access employment. Transit systems often lack accessibility features, such as elevators and real-time updates, which disproportionately impact youth with disabilities or those in remote areas. Additionally, the scarcity of affordable housing near employment hubs exacerbates commuting challenges. Investments in sustainable infrastructure and affordable housing policies are essential to improving urban mobility and inclusion.



Mental health and well-being – *Montréal, Vancouver, Calgary, Moncton, Yellowknife, Whitehorse*

The stigma around mental health and lack of accessible resources prevent many youth from seeking help. The stress of "hustle culture," combined with financial and academic pressures, contributes to widespread anxiety and burnout. Workplaces and educational institutions often fail to prioritize mental well-being or provide necessary accommodations, leaving youth to manage unsustainable workloads. Expanding access to affordable mental health services and integrating wellness initiatives into workplaces and schools is critical. These issues are prevalent across both urban and rural settings.



Environmental and climate resilience challenges – *Vancouver, Montréal*

Youth are eager to contribute to climate solutions but face limited access to green jobs, resources, and training. Marginalized communities are disproportionately affected by climate emergencies, yet often lack the tools to advocate for change or lead initiatives. Addressing this requires investing in climate education and job creation while ensuring marginalized voices are included in sustainability planning. Partnerships with Indigenous communities can also provide valuable insights into ecological resilience.



Recognition of diverse skills and credentials – *Yellowknife, Calgary*

International students, immigrants, and individuals with non-traditional skills often find their credentials devalued or unrecognized in the labour market. This forces many to restart their education or accept low-paying jobs unrelated to their expertise. Developing pathways for credential recognition and valuing diverse experiences, such as land-based knowledge, can create more inclusive employment opportunities and reduce talent underutilization.



Engaging marginalized and isolated communities – *Whitehorse*

Youth in Whitehorse pointed to the lack of comprehensive efforts to engage isolated communities in career and educational programs. The geographical and virtual divide limits participation, leaving these groups underserved. Increasing targeted outreach and investing in hybrid engagement models that combine digital and in-person approaches could help foster inclusivity and active participation.



Fragmented community support networks – *Moncton*

Youth in Moncton emphasized that mental wellness, education, and employment resources often operate in silos, leading to gaps in support. This fragmentation results in inefficient service delivery and unmet needs. Creating integrated youth hubs that combine these services under one roof can streamline access and foster collaboration among service providers. Involving youth in the design process ensures that these solutions are relevant and effective.



Public transit accessibility – *Montréal, Vancouver, Calgary, Moncton, Yellowknife, Whitehorse*

Youth across cities highlighted gaps in public transit systems, including limited routes, infrequent services, and a lack of accessibility features such as ramps and elevators. These limitations hinder their ability to commute efficiently to work, school, and community activities. Expanding transit infrastructure, increasing affordability, and ensuring equity in service distribution are critical to improving mobility and access to opportunities.



Access to localized career opportunities – *Yellowknife*

Youth in Yellowknife expressed concerns about the disconnection between their skills and local employment opportunities. Many felt their existing skills were undervalued or incompatible with local industries. Addressing this requires targeted efforts to align local job markets with youth capabilities through initiatives such as job shadowing programs, mentorships, and industry partnerships.



Health and public wellness resources – *Montréal, Vancouver, Calgary, Moncton, Yellowknife, Whitehorse*

Youth in multiple cities identified significant gaps in access to health resources, particularly mental health and preventative care. Remote and underserved areas often lack adequate healthcare infrastructure, leaving youth without the support they need to thrive. Expanding telehealth options, improving accessibility to local clinics, and implementing community wellness programs can address these challenges and provide youth with holistic support systems.



Sarah Mekonen and Victoria Fils-Aimé pitching *La Boussole*.

Proposed solutions

In each city where summits and community events were held, youth participated in dialogue and workshops to co-develop solutions to the challenges identified within their communities. These events provided an opportunity to explore how the skills for success outlined by ESDC resonate with youth, while also uncovering other key skills that emerge as crucial for their development. Additionally, the discussions highlighted areas where the existing framework might need to be revised to better align with the needs and aspirations of young people in today's evolving workforce.

Montréal

1. **Networking Cafés:** A low-cost model for informal, inclusive spaces where youth and professionals can connect, using public spaces and community sponsorships to ensure affordability. (Urban Work Summit - English)
2. **Peer-to-Peer Mentorship App:** An app to match young professionals with industry peers for early-career mentorship, fostering support and professional growth. (Urban Work Summit - English)
3. **Work-Life Harmony Toolkit:** A resource guide co-created by youth and HR professionals, offering strategies for flexible scheduling, mental health support, and employee-centred policies. (Urban

Work Summit - English)

4. **Advocacy Campaigns:** Campaigns to encourage employers to adopt flexible working hours, remote work, and wellness initiatives for healthier work environments. (Urban Work Summit - English)
5. **Employer-Youth Alignment Workshops:** Interactive sessions where employers and youth align expectations through role-reversal activities, fostering mutual understanding.
6. **Onboarding Reimagined:** A redesigned onboarding process to clarify expectations early and allow youth to articulate their goals, reducing miscommunication. (Urban Work Summit-English)
7. **Inclusive Hiring Workshops:** Workshops focusing on equitable hiring practices and removing barriers for marginalized youth. (Urban Work Summit - English)
8. **Subsidized Transit Programs:** Advocacy for municipal transit subsidies to reduce commuting costs and improve youth access to job opportunities. (Urban Work Summit - English)
9. **La Boussole:** An initiative aimed at exposing young people to various skill sets through workshops in different fields. It helps participants develop new skills and supports them in starting their own projects with mentorship from experts. *La Boussole* received \$1,000 in support from Youthful Cities (YC) during its initial months. (Urban Work Summit - French)



Berenice Buteau, Sophie Gaudreau, and Camélia Vienneau pitching *E-Conscience*.

10. **Mental Health Alliance (Support de Santé Mentale):** A project to make mental health treatment more accessible for individuals who speak foreign languages. The goal is to create a website that connects clients with therapists and provides guidance to resources that can improve their mental health. It received \$1,000 in support from YC during its early stages. (Urban Work Summit - French)
11. **E-Conscience:** Focused on green jobs, this project aims to develop a website offering seminars to high school students to address the issue of “greenwashing.” The initiative seeks to encourage organizations to adopt more sustainable practices and improve their ecological integrity. E-Conscience received \$4,000 in support from YC in its early months. (Urban Work Summit - French)
12. **Atelier: Interv-you:** This initiative helps young people (ages 14-25) with networking, mentoring, CV creation, and professional photo services. For those unable to attend in person, online resources are available to support them. Interv-you received \$4,000 in support from YC during its first few months. (Urban Work Summit - French)
13. **Improved Government Intervention:** Expand affordable housing initiatives and maintain consistency in transit services across boroughs. (TLYS)
14. **Enhanced Transit Infrastructure:** Add elevators and restrooms to metro stations and implement real-time updates for buses and metro services. (TLYS)

15. **Local Resource Accessibility:** Support borough-specific services, such as language classes and career workshops, and ensure equitable access to technology and professional resources. (TLYS)
16. **Inclusive Employment Practices:** Offer workplace language support programs for newcomers or better access to existing services. (TLYS)

Key skills for success identified

- Participants identified key skills for career growth, including **advocacy, policy analysis, and project management**. These skills empower youth to pursue roles in fields such as social work, public administration, and urban planning.
- **Digital literacy with mentorship:** To support pathways into tech, data analysis, and urban studies, offering foundational skills for future roles in these fields.
- **Language proficiency:** Reducing barriers for both youth and professionals.
- **Adaptability:** Navigating affordability challenges and transit inefficiencies.
- **Collaboration:** Engaging with community members, peers, and local governments for collective solutions.
- **Problem-Solving:** Creative approaches to address mobility and resource distribution.



Adewunmi Ajike, Cyanne Chun, and Madhu Priya pitching *Phlox*.

Key takeaways and recommendations

- Montréal faces a pressing need for accessible transit, equitable urban services, and affordable housing. Solutions proposed include increased government intervention, consistent resources at the borough level, and workplace language programs.
- The creative city mapping activity highlighted the value of collaboration in tackling urban challenges.
- By implementing these solutions and skills, Montréal has the potential to improve its livability and foster a more inclusive urban environment for youth and all residents.

Toronto

1. **Phlox Program:** Empowering women to make informed academic and career decisions, the program addresses systemic barriers faced by women of colour and marginalized groups. Two-week shadowing opportunities with professionals, confidence-building and career awareness, and tailored matching with industry leaders. (Urban Work Summit)
2. **NextWork Platform:** Tackling the disparity between job listings, skills, and mentorship, the platform uses advanced matching digital technology for mentorship and networking opportunities, and offers real-time EDI-focused data to create inclusive career pathways. (Urban

Work Summit)

3. **CredentialLens:** Transparency in micro-credentialing and training programs, with crowdsourced reviews of courses, clear insights on cost, value, and relevance, and helps youth and career changers make informed decisions. (Urban Work Summit)
4. **Youth Financial Education:** Integrate practical financial literacy into schools and community workshops to empower underserved populations. (Financial Literacy Summit)
5. **Bridging Employment Gaps:** Advocate for equitable wages, lived experience recognition, and financial literacy apps to support budgeting and planning. (Financial Literacy Summit)
6. **Simplifying Finances:** Use gamified tools and visual aids to make financial concepts engaging and relatable. (Financial Literacy Summit)
7. **Mentorship and Advocacy:** Foster professional growth through mentorship, provide interactive financial toolkits, and advocate for transit subsidies and flexible work policies. (Financial Literacy Summit)

Key skills for success identified

- **Digital literacy:** Critical for thriving in Toronto's tech-driven economy.
- **Financial literacy:** Essential to navigate the city's high cost of living.



Left to right: Patrice Tai-Clair (Youthful Cities); *YOUterus* team: Anshul Sharma, Salman Saleem, Mona Salad, Piper Stump.

- **Communication and collaboration:** Building EDI-friendly workplaces.
- **Networking skills:** Leveraging professional connections for career growth.
- **Adaptability:** Essential to manage workplace demands and foster work-life balance.
- **Problem-Solving:** Addressing mismatches in expectations effectively.
- **Budgeting and advocacy:** Crucial for navigating Toronto's financial challenges and addressing systemic inequities.
- **Critical thinking and collaboration:** Key for thriving in community development, public policy, and education roles.

Key takeaways and recommendations

- The Toronto Urban Work event highlighted the need for targeted initiatives addressing systemic barriers, skills gaps, and equity challenges. By prioritizing digital access, EDI, and mentorship, Toronto can create a more inclusive and resilient workforce. The proposed projects offer scalable solutions to empower youth and shape their pathways toward meaningful employment and economic independence. Toronto's future depends on the collective action of its youth, professionals, and policymakers. Through collaboration and innovation, we can create a city where every young person has the tools to succeed.

- The Toronto Financial Literacy event showcased the need for youth-focused, accessible financial education and equitable workplace practices. By addressing systemic barriers, simplifying financial concepts, and advocating for collaborative solutions, Toronto can empower its youth to achieve financial independence.
- Through initiatives such as youth mentorship programs, flexible work policies, and digital financial tools, the event laid the groundwork for actionable solutions to help marginalized youth overcome financial challenges.

Vancouver

1. **YOUterus:** An innovative project aimed at engaging women and girls in the trades by advocating for construction companies and trade unions to become certified. (National Summit)
2. **Climate Ready:** A project focused on preparing newcomer communities for extreme climate events. Inspired by community evacuations, wildfires, drier summers, and flooding in British Columbia, a group of youth proposed climate preparedness kits for newcomers. These kits, available in multiple languages, would equip newcomers and Indigenous community members with emergency supplies in case they were unable to leave their homes, as well as tools to prepare for climate change-induced emergencies. (National Summit)



Finlit Island winning a microgrant to launch their idea. Team members: Jessica Li (front), Karel Kym Sauvageau, Kevin Chau, Swapnil Jain, Carly Le, Michelle Lei, Mercedes Phillips.

3. **Finlit Island:** An interactive app designed for newcomer youth to enhance their financial literacy skills, including budgeting, investing, saving, and understanding credit scores. (National Summit)
4. **Live & Learn:** A concept to connect retired working professionals with international students and newcomers. This initiative aims to match seniors with surplus housing to people facing housing insecurity while also facilitating intergenerational connections. (National Summit)
5. **Wonder of Walking (WoW):** An app designed to help vulnerable youth identify safe walking routes in urban centres. While navigation apps typically focus on driving and traffic, walking is the most common form of transport for many young people. However, they are often unfamiliar with safe walking routes that feature well-lit streets, pedestrian traffic, and open shops. (National Summit)
6. **Let Us Cook:** A workshop series designed to enhance integration skills for newcomer youth through cooking classes and workshops. (National Summit)
7. **Digital Allies:** A workshop concept aimed at facilitating skills bartering to improve digital skills among youth. (National Summit)
8. **BIPOC Mentorship Cafe (Cafe Connect):** A monthly café series to improve mentorship opportunities for BIPOC youth. (National Summit)
9. **Breathing Book:** A service concept to connect professionals and youth through matching

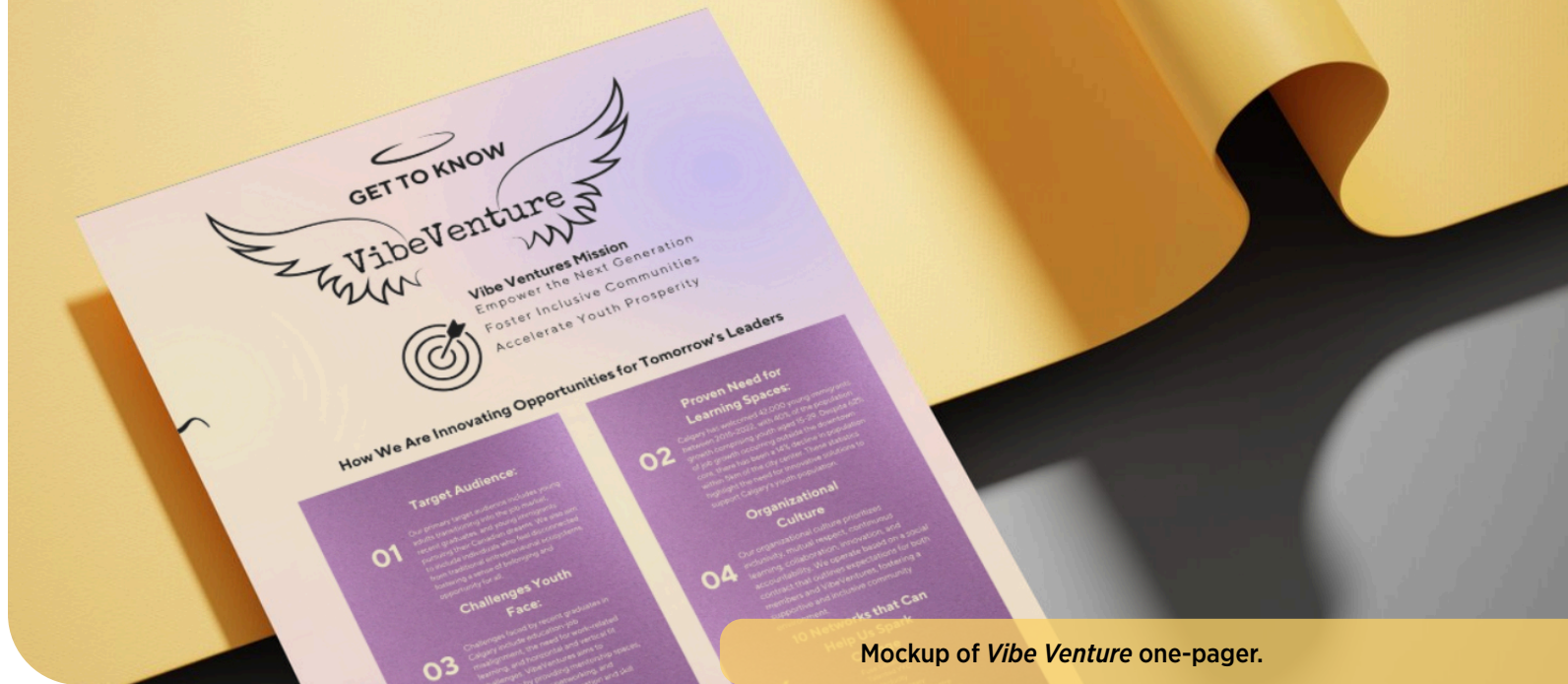
profiles. (National Summit)

Key skills for success identified

- **Adaptability:** Youth must develop the ability to adjust to changing career landscapes, evolving industries like the green economy, and balancing work with education and personal development.
- **Collaboration:** Strong interpersonal skills are critical for youth to effectively engage in teamwork, mentorship programs, and intergenerational initiatives that support career and community growth.
- **Problem-Solving:** Youth need the ability to analyze challenges, such as workplace expectation gaps or urban mobility issues, and develop innovative solutions that align with their goals.
- **Digital literacy:** Proficiency in technology is essential for navigating modern education, accessing job opportunities, and utilizing financial tools effectively.

Key takeaways and recommendations

- **Bridging gaps in career pathways:** The transition to a green economy and inclusion of diverse knowledge systems necessitate accessible education and mentorship programs tailored to sustainable industries and cultural equity.
- **Enhancing digital and financial access:** Providing digital literacy training and financial education



Mockup of Vibe Venture one-pager.

programs can close gaps for vulnerable youth, enabling them to better navigate modern economic systems.

- **Fostering safety and resilience:** Safe urban mobility, climate resilience initiatives, and mental health support must be integrated into youth-focused programs to address systemic barriers and vulnerabilities.

Calgary

1. **Culturebook:** Focuses on healthy eating and the food economy within Calgary's ethnic communities. It raises awareness of healthy eating, promotes small businesses offering authentic foods, and provides networking and learning opportunities for youth interested in careers in the food industry. (Urban Work Summit)
2. **Vibe Venture:** Creates placemaking spaces for youth seeking entrepreneurial opportunities and mentorship but lacking a sense of belonging in traditional innovation hubs. Partners with organizations citywide to activate spaces closer to home, extending innovation beyond downtown and campuses. (Urban Work Summit)
3. **Building Futures Initiative (BFI):** A website and campaign promoting employment and mentorship opportunities for recent graduates in Calgary. It centralizes youth employment resources and drives engagement through social media campaigns. (Urban Work Summit)
4. **Professionalizing Career Guidance:** Establishes certifications and competitive salaries for high school counselors, improving their reputation and capacity to empower students. Builds strong networks to connect youth with internships, workshops, and mentorships. (Urban Work Summit)
5. **Entrepreneurship Support for Non-Students:** Offers mentorship, resources, and seed funding for youth entrepreneurs outside of school. Includes business skills training, networking opportunities, and funding strategies. (Urban Work Summit)
6. **Addressing Mental Health and Affordability:** Advocates for freezing tuition hikes, increasing affordable housing, and expanding financial aid. Enhances accessible, stigma-free mental health services to help youth balance work, study, and wellbeing. (Urban Work Summit)
7. **Promoting Digital Literacy:** Expands minors and certificate programs in emerging technologies like AI and digital transformation. Offers free or affordable digital literacy workshops for youth outside academia to ensure equitable skill-building. (Urban Work Summit)
8. **Bridging Education and Employment Gaps:** Develops diverse learning opportunities in post-secondary institutions, emphasizing cross-sector skills and paid internships. Expands co-op and practicum programs, particularly for fields like Arts and Sciences, to improve equitable access to real-world experience. (Urban Work Summit)



Zine Making Workshop

9. **Improving Skills Development:** Revamps post-secondary curricula with integrated training in networking, resume building, and interview skills tailored to specific fields. Embeds networking opportunities within programs to ensure equitable access for all students. (Urban Work Summit)
10. **Youth Strategies for Employment:** Youth are taking diverse approaches to improve their employment prospects. This includes personally delivering resumes to managers to make a strong impression, developing entrepreneurial ventures for financial independence, and engaging in intrapreneurship to contribute innovative solutions within organizations. Many focus on building practical skills outside traditional education through gig work or independent projects, such as web development, to gain experience and income. Additionally, there is a growing advocacy for workplaces to emphasize human dignity and meaningful work. (Workplace Vibes)
11. **Enhanced Workshops for Career Preparedness:** Expand access to comprehensive career readiness workshops in high schools. These should cover practical skills such as building resumes from scratch, acquiring pre-employment experiences, and navigating early job opportunities. Workshops should also emphasize actionable strategies for networking, entrepreneurship, and career exploration. (Workplace Vibes)
12. **Youth Advisory Boards and Advocacy Channels:** Establish youth advisory boards that allow direct communication between young people and policymakers. These boards would give youth a voice in shaping programs and advocating for their needs. Collaborate with municipal governments and organizations to implement tangible programs and initiatives based on youth input. (Workplace Vibes)
13. **Culturally Tailored Community Outreach:** Partner with cultural organizations, faith centres, and community groups to host career discussions and guidance sessions in diverse areas across the city. This approach ensures that underrepresented youth receive relevant, culturally sensitive support while building connections with their local communities. (Workplace Vibes)
14. **Accessible Community Features:** Simple innovations like public free water stations and garbage cans with bottle-collecting rims can support vulnerable populations while promoting inclusivity. These features also encourage shared use of public spaces, fostering a sense of mutual respect within communities. (Kensington Tour + Zine Making Workshop)
15. **Greener and More Creative Urban Design:** Planting trees for natural shade and incorporating greenery into urban spaces can improve comfort and enhance wellbeing. Youth prefer organic solutions over mechanical ones, as they better align with the need for accessible and restorative public environments. (Kensington Tour + Zine Making Workshop)
16. **Promoting Affordable and Inclusive Spaces:** Designing community spaces with affordability



Moncton Data Walk

and inclusivity in mind, such as multi-functional areas with unique layouts or public outdoor displays, can foster creativity and a sense of belonging. These spaces should balance funding and accessibility to ensure they are welcoming to all. (Kensington Tour + Zine Making Workshop)

Key Skills for Success Identified

- **Adaptability:** Youth face limited career pathways and systemic barriers, underscoring the need for educational systems to prioritize adaptability and cross-disciplinary applications.
- **Digital literacy:** A lack of exposure to emerging technologies like AI and machine learning highlights the importance of integrating digital skills into curricula and providing equitable access to training outside academia.
- **Problem-Solving:** Financial stress, mental health pressures, and systemic affordability issues require innovative, structural solutions to support youth in balancing work, study, and well-being.
- **Collaboration:** The need for accessible mentorship, networking, and co-working spaces points to the importance of fostering collaboration skills in youth.

Key takeaways and recommendations

- Centralized youth hubs and data-sharing initiatives are critical to bridging gaps between

mental wellness, education, and employment, ensuring programs meet youth needs.

- Expanding affordable housing, paid experiential learning opportunities, and entrepreneurship support are essential to reduce systemic inequities and empower youth.
- Greater integration of digital literacy and emerging technologies into education and training programs is vital for preparing youth for future job markets.

Moncton

1. **Integrated Youth Support Model:** Focus on creating youth hubs to provide a centralized space for mental wellness, employment, and education resources.
2. **Data Sharing Initiative:** Use the DEVLab data to inform and guide future community programs and policies, ensuring they meet youth needs.

Key Skills for Success Identified

- **Collaboration:** The need for spaces and tools as a means of both direct collaboration and developing it as a skill is needed for youth.
- **Problem-Solving:** Developing the skill requires a comprehensive understanding of youth needs, but can be better supporting youth through multiple programs.



Yellowknife Youth Action Summit

Key takeaways and recommendations

- The summit emphasized the importance of creating interconnected support systems to address multiple challenges faced by youth in Moncton.
- Attendees recognized the need for continuous data-sharing and collaboration between organizations to ensure comprehensive youth engagement.

Yellowknife

1. **Job Shadowing Program:** A proposal to co-design a job shadowing program with local employers and youth, focusing on industries such as mining, food service, and social services.
2. **Paid Internship Programs and Financial Literacy Training:** Emphasis on increasing awareness of paid internships and developing financial literacy training tailored to youth needs.
3. **Leadership Development:** Encouraging youth participation in leadership roles within the community and organizations.
4. **Land-Based Skills Integration:** Creating opportunities for youth to leverage traditional knowledge for income generation, such as eco-tourism or cultural education.

Key skills for success identified

- **Adaptability:** Youth need to navigate diverse and non-traditional career pathways, integrating land-based skills and balancing employment with personal development and education.
- **Collaboration:** Effective partnerships between youth, employers, and communities are crucial for creating leadership opportunities, job shadowing programs, and career pathways that align with local industries and traditional knowledge.

Key takeaways and recommendations

- A disconnect exists between youth skills (including traditional knowledge) and workforce demands, requiring innovative approaches to make these skills more employable.
- Limited awareness of career opportunities and paid internships hinders youth from accessing valuable professional experiences and financial stability.
- Youth face barriers to leadership roles, highlighting the importance of fostering leadership development within organizations and communities.

Whitehorse

1. **Focused Action Teams:** The action teams for the three priorities will continue their work throughout



Urban Work Index 2024 Launch Event — Toronto

the winter, refining their goals and laying out concrete plans for the coming year.

2. **Expanding the Data Walk:** The Territorial Youth Strategy (TYS) team expressed interest in running additional data walks across different communities to ensure the data is accessible to more Collaborators, even those in remote areas.

Key takeaways and recommendations

- **Alignment with TYS Priorities:** Feedback from youth surveys and interviews closely aligned with the Territorial Youth Strategy (TYS) priorities, confirming the relevance and importance of the data.
- **Interest in Data Sharing:** Several community partners expressed interest in using the shared data for their own work and in running similar data walks in their communities.
- **Youth Support Models:** The event sparked discussions about creating integrated support models for youth, such as youth hubs, to provide holistic support in Whitehorse and surrounding areas.

Regina

In Regina, the DEVLab project involved conducting 14 interviews and collecting 60 survey responses from youth to better understand their experiences, challenges, and aspirations related to education,

employment, and life outcomes. However, no Action Summit was held in Regina as it was not included in the project budget.

Additionally, the focal staff member at a local partner (United Way Regina), a main collaborator for the project, transitioned out of their role, and no replacement was allocated to continue their work. Despite efforts to explore alternatives, the local partner did not express interest in hosting an online event due to limited capacity on their end. This resulted in no formal sharing or discussion of the research findings/ insights within the community.

Urban Work Index 2024 Launch Events

The Urban Work Index 2024 was launched in October 2024, simultaneously in four major Canadian cities: Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, and Montréal. Part of the DEVLab project, this comprehensive index ranks 30 Canadian cities based on their livability and work environments for youth. The launch events in each city showcased key themes shaping youth employment and urban growth.

In Vancouver, the discussions highlighted climate action, entrepreneurial spirit, and equity, diversity, and inclusion, addressing critical challenges like the housing crisis and the need to empower BIPOC leaders in the green economy. Toronto, ranked first in the Urban Work Index, focused on youth unemployment and the rising

demand for green jobs, emphasizing the importance of follow-up collaborations between youth and policymakers. Calgary's event centred on bridging skill development gaps and aligning immigrant youth with the city's talent pipeline. Affordability was identified as both a competitive advantage and a growing concern for retaining a skilled workforce. In Montréal, the conversation revolved around overcoming linguistic barriers, promoting digital inclusion, and tackling workforce inequities, fostering stronger connections between municipal representatives, academics, and youth leaders.

Collectively, these events shed light on shared challenges, such as affordability, inclusion, and skill alignment, while celebrating the unique strengths of each city. From engaging youth in entrepreneurial and green opportunities to fostering cross-sector collaboration, these discussions laid the foundation for actionable strategies to support young people in Canada's urban centres. The events underscored the need for ongoing dialogue and innovative solutions to ensure cities remain inclusive, dynamic, and ready for the future.



Top: Céline-Audrey Beauregard, Conseillère d'arrondissement, accepting the Urban Work Index Climate Action award on behalf of the City of Montréal.

Bottom: Oki Adeoba (Youthful Cities) presenting Clare Barnett, Director, Business Growth Services, the award for overall winner of the Urban Work Index 2024 for the City of Toronto.



Youth at the Montréal Urban Work Summit

YOUTH SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PATHWAYS

Through the analysis of challenges, solutions, and engagement with young people beyond events (as explored in part one of the report), diverse skills pathways were identified in the cities. This section provides a description of potential skills pathways for young people, and for the four larger cities (Montréal, Toronto, Calgary, and Vancouver), depicts potential steps that can be taken to implement a specific skills pathway.

A Journey to Employment and Empowerment in Montréal, Toronto, and Calgary



Digital and Technological Literacy Pathway

- **Montréal:** The burgeoning AI and gaming industries offer a wealth of opportunities for young people in creative technology, software development, and multimedia production. The city's thriving ecosystem includes numerous AI
- research labs, game development studios, and digital media companies, providing ample avenues for internships, apprenticeships, and entry-level positions. Local universities and colleges offer specialized programs in AI, game design, and digital media, ensuring a steady supply of skilled talent. Additionally, government initiatives and industry partnerships support the growth of the tech sector, making Montréal an attractive destination for young professionals seeking careers in the digital economy.
- **Toronto:** The focus on digital jobs within urban tech, smart city initiatives, and finance-related technologies provides a diverse range of opportunities for youth. The city's tech sector is supported by a strong network of incubators, accelerators, and co-working spaces, fostering innovation and entrepreneurship. Public-private partnerships drive the development of smart city solutions, creating jobs in data analytics, urban planning, and sustainable technology. The city's financial district also offers opportunities in fintech, with a growing demand for software developers, data scientists, and cybersecurity experts. Toronto's numerous universities and colleges offer programs in computer science, engineering, and business, ensuring a steady supply of skilled talent to meet the demands of the digital economy.
- **Calgary:** The emerging tech sector, with a focus on energy and sustainability, offers unique opportunities for youth in digital transformation, renewable energy, and automation. The city's

traditional energy sector is undergoing a digital transformation, creating demand for skills in data analytics, artificial intelligence, and automation. The growing focus on renewable energy and clean technology also presents opportunities for young people with expertise in sustainable engineering, energy management, and environmental science. Government initiatives and industry partnerships support the development of the clean tech sector, making Calgary an attractive destination for young professionals seeking careers in sustainable technology and energy innovation.



Entrepreneurship and Innovation Pathway

- **Montréal:** Supporting youth-driven startups in arts, design, and creative tech. Incubators and funding programs help scale innovative business ideas.
- **Toronto:** Prioritizing entrepreneurship in fintech, real estate, and AI-driven solutions. Youth can access mentorship, government grants, and startup accelerators.
- **Calgary:** Encouraging business development in energy tech, agribusiness, and logistics, with strong backing from innovation hubs and investment funds.



Work-Integrated Learning and Experiential Growth Pathway

- **Montréal:** Focusing on co-op and internship programs in creative industries, media, and public policy, ensuring students gain real-world experience.
- **Toronto:** Providing paid opportunities in corporate, non-profit, and tech sectors, leveraging partnerships with post-secondary institutions and employers.
- **Calgary:** Offering hands-on learning in the energy, engineering, and construction sectors, incorporating practical training through internships and apprenticeships.



Multi-Field Career Adaptability Pathway

- **Montréal:** Project management skills are highly transferable and applicable to various sectors, making it a promising career transition option. The creative industries also value creative problem-solving and collaboration skills, which are sought after across numerous fields. Additionally, expertise in urban design can be leveraged for opportunities in urban planning and community development.
- **Toronto:** The finance sector offers transferable skills that can be applied to healthcare, technology, and non-profit organizations, opening doors for career transitions. The healthcare industry values data analysis, project management, and patient advocacy skills. Furthermore, the technology sector presents opportunities in both emerging fields and traditional industries undergoing digital transformation.
- **Calgary:** Individuals in Calgary's traditional energy sectors can transition to renewable energy and clean technology by upskilling. The green industries require skills in renewable energy and sustainability, which are essential for the growing green economy. Additionally, tech roles in software development and data analysis offer promising career paths.



Trade Skills and Workforce Development Pathway

- **Montréal:** Strengthening the skilled trades sector with a focus on sustainable construction and infrastructure development.
- **Toronto:** Addressing high-demand trades like renewable energy, construction, and transportation, integrating certifications and apprenticeships.
- **Calgary:** Prioritizing skilled trades for energy, agriculture, and industrial manufacturing, ensuring workforce alignment with economic needs.



Affordable Education and Training Pathway

- **Montréal:**
 - **Subsidized Training:** Offering financial aid and scholarships for creative tech, AI, and design programs, making specialized education more affordable.
 - **Partnerships with Industry:** Collaborating with tech companies and creative agencies to develop relevant curricula and provide hands-on learning experiences.
 - **Incubator and Accelerator Programs:** Supporting young entrepreneurs in launching startups in the creative and tech sectors.
- **Toronto:**
 - **Expanded Access:** Increasing enrollment capacity in vocational and post-secondary programs, particularly in high-demand fields like digital technology, healthcare, and skilled trades.
 - **Bridge Training:** Providing targeted training programs to help individuals transition into digital and healthcare careers, including those from underrepresented groups.
 - **Work-Integrated Learning:** Creating more opportunities for apprenticeships, internships, and co-op placements in high-demand fields.
- **Calgary:**
 - **Upskilling for Emerging Energy:** Investing in training programs for renewable energy, energy efficiency, and clean technology sectors, preparing youth for sustainable careers.
 - **Just Transition Support:** Providing training and support for workers in the traditional energy sector to transition into new jobs in the emerging energy economy.
 - **Green Skills Development:** Partnering with educational institutions and industry to develop and deliver training programs in green skills and technologies.



Mentorship and Networking Pathway

- **Montréal:** A focus on creative industries, public policy, and urban planning would involve pairing young, emerging talent with established professionals in their respective fields. This approach provides hands-on learning experiences and mentorship opportunities, fostering a direct connection between the city's youth and its experienced leaders. These pairings would offer portfolio reviews, industry insights, and practical experience, giving young people valuable exposure and career guidance.
- **Toronto:** Mentorship programs would center around business, law, and technology, connecting young professionals with experienced leaders in these sectors. The aim is to cultivate leadership skills, business strategy, and technical expertise through guidance and career development support. Additionally, industry events and workshops would facilitate networking and relationship building between mentors and mentees, creating a strong professional community.
- **Calgary:** Mentorship opportunities would be geared towards energy, engineering, and entrepreneurship. Young professionals in these fields would connect with experienced engineers, geologists, energy executives, and successful business owners. The focus is on career guidance, technical skills development, and fostering innovation through mentorship and networking opportunities at industry events and conferences.

Multi-Field Career Adaptability Pathway

Youth identify transferable skills via workshops and assessments. Through the summits, Montréal youth excelled in gaining project management skills, Toronto youth gained further data analysis, digital, and financial literacy skills, and the summits in Calgary included a focus on upskilling that translates well to the tech and energy sectors.

Collaborators: Career hubs, mentors, educators. Within your city, reach out to employment service centers, non-profit organizations or charities that cater to youth (i.e., mentorship programs), trades programs, and tech boot camps to coordinate sessions that can support youth learning these transferable skills.

Tools/Resources: Skills assessment tools, workshops, skill certifications, and social networks where youth can connect with professionals, employers, and industries.

Young people can enroll in upskilling programs or courses (which may include courses on written and public communication, data analysis, etc.). It is important that youth searching for these opportunities on their own also receive support on how to find and register for these programs. Collaboration is crucial in regards to advertising these programs for youth while ensuring that the skills are relevant across industries.

Collaborators: Educational institutions, career advisors, youth workers, and businesses.

Tools/Resources: Online learning platforms, training courses.

Youth are encouraged to attend mentorship programs and/or networking events. As part of the upskilling workshops, training on networking would be valuable.

Collaborators: Industry mentors, alumni networks, and upskilling program facilitators.

Tools/Resources: Networking platforms (capacity to build professional and mentorship network), skills acquired from the mentorship programs.

Apply for diverse roles in urban industries. As part of the program training, youth can receive support on how to map different careers that connect to their skills and apply to job shadowing, co-op, or transitional programs to build their work experience across several industries: The summits enabled youth to gain transferable skills applicable to various industries.

For example, project management skills acquired by Montréal youth can be applied to urban planning, healthcare, IT, or construction. Toronto youth can leverage financial and data analysis skills in the non-profit, financial, policy, or healthcare sectors. Calgary youth with skills in trades, energy, and sustainability can transition into engineering roles in construction and automotive industries or tech roles through software development.

Collaborators: Employers, recruitment agencies.

Tools/Resources: Resume-building services, job boards.

Build a portfolio with mentors and career services. Gain experience through the skills training program, the network of professionals, and connecting with a position to build experience.

Collaborators: Career hubs, mentors, educators.

Tools/Resources: Portfolio-building platforms, career services.

Work-Integrated Learning Pathway and Experiential Growth Pathway

While doing their own research, youth can also work with collaborators to find co-op and internship programs. Earlier introduction to work-integrated learning, such as co-op as a standard part of the school curriculum for all students, can ensure more work experience for all youth.

Collaborators: Academic advisors, Employers, nonprofits, local industries, schools.

Tools/Resources: Job portals, career platforms.

To effectively integrate paid internships and programs into post-secondary curriculum, collaboration with industry partners, employer services, and schools is essential to facilitate these paid opportunities. Additionally, exploring grant opportunities and condensed timelines for paid internships through non-profit organizations can provide further avenues for implementation. Seeking additional support from city governments for paid internship opportunities can also enhance the scope and availability of these valuable experiences for students.

Collaborators: Government agencies, and employers.

Tools/Resources: Funding databases, and wage subsidy guides.

Volunteer in urban community projects if paid options are limited. Young people and youth workers can conduct outreach to learn where to find volunteer opportunities via schools, nonprofits, charities, and community organizations in Toronto, Montréal, and Calgary.

Collaborators: Community organizations, charities, and nonprofits.

Tools/Resources: Volunteer boards, local community groups, and businesses taking part in job shadowing or internships.

Attend networking events and career fairs.

Collaborators: Professional associations, career counselors.

Tools/Resources: Event platforms, career fair guides, and building a professional network.

Reflect on experiences with counselors or mentors.

Collaborators: Academic advisors, career coaches.

Tools/Resources: Reflection guides, skills mapping tools.

Digital and Technological Literacy Pathway

Take foundational digital skills courses and gain advice from local industry consultants (as part of the upskilling process) to ensure these courses are aligned well with industry needs. Young people and youth workers can conduct some outreach to local employment services in Toronto, Montréal, and Calgary to assess how they may offer support with skills development.

Collaborators: Libraries, nonprofits, and employer services.

Tools/Resources: Online platforms, tutorials.

Obtain certifications for specific tools or platforms, such as microcredentials and tech boot camps, as a viable pathway for skills development. It may be helpful if more employers provided support with these certification programs as part of the upskilling process.

Collaborators: Tech companies, certification bodies, employers, and schools.

Tools/Resources: Certification programs, online resources.

Apply skills through small projects or internships. Connecting with a non-profit to fulfill a project, assisting on a research project through an academic institution, or demonstrating skills through an employment training program might be viable options to demonstrate experience.

Collaborators: Startups, tech hubs, non-profits, schools, and employment services.

Tools/Resources: Freelance platforms, project-based learning tools.

Network with professionals in the tech ecosystem. These events might be advertised through social media platforms, professional spaces such as LinkedIn, via student or alumni channels.

Collaborators: Tech companies, digital literacy organizations, and local tech hubs.

Tools/Resources: Meetup platforms, hackathons, and social media platforms.

Secure an entry-level tech role with support from job boards through acquiring tech skills, demonstrating these skills by fulfilling a project, and expanding professional networks through networking.

Collaborators: Recruitment platforms, and career readiness organizations.

Tools/Resources: Job boards, and tailored resume templates.

Multi-Field Career Adaptability Pathway

Attend urban entrepreneurship workshops. In Montréal, this typically translates to youth-driven startups as part of design, arts, creative tech, and scaling innovative business ideas; in Toronto, entrepreneurship prioritizes fintech, AI-driven solutions, and real estate; Calgary's entrepreneurship tends to encourage growth in agribusiness, energy tech, logistics. These projects are supported through strong investment funds and innovation hubs.

Collaborators: Accelerators, investors, city programs, government grants.

Tools/Resources: Startup workshops, mentoring programs.

Apply for grants and/or funding programs for startups. Youth can gain support for the application process through mentorship programs or business accelerators in addition to applying for these grants independently. There are accelerators through post-secondary institutions, as well as programs on the municipal, provincial, and federal levels.

Collaborators: Grant providers, venture capital firms.

Tools/Resources: Grant databases, application guides.

Build a network through incubators and community hubs.

Collaborators: Incubators, accelerators.

Tools/Resources: Networking events, entrepreneurship communities, and co-working spaces.

Launch a prototype addressing urban challenges. As part of the Youthful Cities Toronto Urban Work event, youth teams pitched different ideas on addressing youth employment and access to financial literacy and skills development tools. These ideas ranged from crowdsourced platforms reviewing microcredentials, to women-focused job shadowing and mentorship.

Collaborators: Product developers, market analysts.

Tools/Resources: Prototyping tools, coworking spaces, government, partnership/sponsorship grants.

Scale or pivot with support from consultants.

Collaborators: Business consultants, scaling advisors.

Tools/Resources: Market analysis tools, strategic planning guides.

Digital and Technological Literacy Pathway

Research trade programs in high-demand sectors: In Montréal, there is a focus on construction and infrastructure development, in Toronto, these in-demand sectors include construction, renewable energy, and transportation; Calgary includes industrial manufacturing, energy, and agriculture.

Collaborators: Trade schools, unions, and employers.

Tools/Resources: Certification directories, online resources.

Apply for grants and scholarships for training.

Collaborators: Nonprofits, trade associations.

Tools/Resources: Scholarship directories, funding resources.

Gain experience through apprenticeships or internships.

Collaborators: Trade unions, employers

Tools/Resources: Apprenticeship boards, union postings.

Attend trade fairs and workshops for networking.

Collaborators: Trade organizations, event organizers

Tools/Resources: Trade fair listings, skill workshops

Develop leadership and communication skills for career growth.

Collaborators: Leadership trainers, communication coaches

Tools/Resources: Training programs, mentorship sessions

A Journey to Employment and Empowerment in Vancouver



Green Economy skills pathway

This pathway equips youth with the knowledge and skills needed to thrive in the flourishing green economy. They will gain a deep understanding of sustainability principles and their application in various sectors, including renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, green building, and eco-tourism. The pathway will offer specialized training programs, hands-on internships, and valuable networking opportunities with environmental organizations, green tech companies, and sustainability-focused businesses. Youth will develop expertise in areas such as renewable energy technologies, sustainable farming practices, energy-efficient building design, and conservation methods, preparing them for a wide range of green careers.



Financial literacy skills pathway

This pathway empowers youth to take control of their finances and make informed financial decisions. They would learn essential financial skills, including budgeting, saving, investing, responsible credit management, and insurance planning. This pathway offers interactive workshops, engaging simulations, and personalized mentorship from financial experts and professionals. Through partnerships with non-profit organizations, financial institutions, and credit unions, young people will gain access to valuable resources and tools to enhance their financial well-being. They will develop the confidence and knowledge to navigate the complexities of personal finance, avoid debt traps, and build a secure financial future.



Vancouver Urban Work Summit



Digital skills and technological literacy pathway

This pathway prepares youth for success in the digital age. They will develop in-demand digital skills, including coding, web development, data analysis, digital marketing, and cybersecurity. The pathway will offer hands-on projects, coding boot camps, hackathons, and networking events with tech companies and digital professionals. Through collaborations with libraries, tech hubs, digital literacy organizations, and online learning platforms, youth will gain access to cutting-edge technology and resources. They will develop the technical expertise and problem-solving abilities needed to thrive in the digital economy and pursue careers in technology, software development, data science, and other digital fields.



Social and intergenerational skills pathway

This pathway cultivates essential social and interpersonal skills, fostering empathy, communication, and community engagement. Youth will engage in workshops, team-building activities, and intergenerational programs that promote understanding and collaboration between different age groups. Through partnerships with NGOs, community centres, and senior living facilities, they will have opportunities to connect with older adults, share experiences, and learn from their wisdom. They will

develop strong communication skills, leadership abilities, and a sense of social responsibility, preparing them for active participation in their communities and future careers in social work, community development, and other people-oriented fields.



Professional mentorship and networking skills pathway

This pathway guides youth in building professional relationships and developing essential career skills. They will engage in career goal setting, networking workshops, resume writing, interview preparation, and personal branding exercises. The pathway will connect youth with mentors from various industries and professions, providing them with guidance, support, and valuable insights into different career paths. Through access to online mentorship platforms and networking events, young people can expand their professional network, gain exposure to different industries, and develop the skills and confidence needed to navigate the job market and achieve their career aspirations.

Green Economy Skills Pathway

Provide awareness and education on different green economy careers (these careers can focus on sustainability and can range from environmental law, energy consultation, urban planning, landscaping, agriculture and agribusiness, etc.).

Collaborators: Environmental organizations, educational institutions, youth job support agencies.

Tools/Resources: Online courses, webinars, environmental organization websites that include job listings.

Build skills and acquire certifications: These certifications may include LEED Accredited Professional certifications (green building), and a City Climate Planner certification.

Collaborators: Trade schools, green tech companies.

Tools/Resources: Certification courses (e.g. ECO Canada Environmental Professional in-training certification), job listings specifying relevant certifications, and volunteer positions involved with environmental initiatives.

Apply for internships, volunteer positions to gain experience, and start networking.

Collaborators: Renewable energy firms, green startups, youth job support agencies, educational institutions.

Tools/Resources: Internship platforms, job search sites such as Indeed, LinkedIn, Youth Job Bank, Idealist (focused on non-profit and volunteer positions), etc.

Start job placement and continue career growth.

Collaborators: Recruitment agencies, youth job support agencies, school programs, and government initiatives, local businesses, internship programs, farms, local parks and recreation departments, forestry departments, conservation initiatives, and urban gardens.

Tools/Resources: Job boards (listed in step 3), nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, employment programs through parks and recreation departments, urban gardens, and conservation initiatives.

Financial Literacy Skills Pathway

Gain foundational knowledge in some fundamental financial literacy: Budgeting, understanding a checking and savings account, using a credit card.

Collaborators: Nonprofit organizations, libraries, and charities that provide financial literacy information, banks, financial associations and corporations, educational platforms, advisors, and peer networks.

Tools/Resources: Excel spreadsheet or Google Sheets to track financial information, or organizational apps such as Notion. Financial apps (YNAB, Quicken, PocketGuard) curriculums and workshops (e.g., YES Program's Financial Literacy, Capability, and Inclusion Curriculum), etc.

Learn skills in practical application:

Taxes, managing personal financial expenses and debt, tracking expenses/paying bills, putting money in an emergency fund, investments, a TFSA, FHSA, or RRSP.

Collaborators: Advisors, financial associations and corporations, peer networks, and educational platforms.

Tools/Resources: Excel spreadsheets, or Google Sheets for tracking, or organizational apps such as Notion Budgeting apps (YNAB, Quicken, PocketGuard, Koho, GoodBudget) tax platforms, and mock investment tools from apps provided by Canadian banks.

Develop more advanced skills: Being able to skillfully manage aforementioned practical applications, while navigating the financial marketplace well.

Collaborators: Financial institutions and associations, and credit unions, banks, and real estate financial management information.

Tools/Resources: Excel spreadsheets, or Google Sheets, or organizational apps such as Notion, personal finance resources such as WOWA (Canadian Encyclopedia on Personal Finance). Some examples for homebuying resources include: CMHC's guide "Your Guide to Buying a Home in Canada" (including info on mortgage insurance, etc), BC Housing's Financial Management Kit, etc.

Maintain organization of personal finance: Great emphasis on this is needed to ensure that youth maintain (or more easily adapt) their financial goals.

Collaborators: Advisors, peer groups.

Tools/Resources: Excel spreadsheets, or Google Sheets to maintain a financial timeline, or organizational apps such as Notion calendar and auto budgeting as well as payments (reminders for payments), apps such as Quicken for tracking financial plans and payments, along with any other relevant apps and/or software.

Digital and Technological Literacy Pathway

Learn basic digital literacy skills: These skills include being able to use the internet, to make searches, communicate online, and evaluate digital content.

Collaborators: Libraries, educational institutions, and nonprofits.

Tools/Resources: Community workshops, and tutorials.

Gain intermediate digital skills: Creating social media marketing content, applying SEO (Search Engine Optimization) techniques effectively managing emails, the ability to conduct simple web design, and critically assess content found online.

Collaborators: Tech companies, training centres, and coding bootcamps.

Tools/Resources: Simple web design apps (Squarespace, Canva, Google Sites, etc.), email management, and tools to help critically assess online content, such as checking multiple sources to ensure reliability of information.

Develop advanced digital skills: Being able to code to develop apps, scripts, and automate tasks, applying data analytics tools to extract insights from large datasets, designing sophisticated digital content, such as websites, animation, and graphic design, cybersecurity skills, and critically understanding how to use AI as a research tool.

Collaborators: Educational institutions, startups, nonprofit training organizations.

Tools/Resources: Certification programs and educational courses.

Engage in skill sharing and networking.

Collaborators: Tech hubs, instruction programs, schools, and mentorship programs.

Tools/Resources: Community forums, curriculum through these tech hubs and instruction programs, and library workshops.

Social and Intergenerational Skills Pathway

Develop empathy and communication skills through interactive workshops focused on active listening, conflict resolution, and building cultural awareness.

Collaborators: Nonprofits, community centres, schools, colleges, and universities.

Tools/Resources: trainings, culturally tailored toolkits.

Engage in group projects and mentorship circles to foster teamwork, leadership, and social responsibility through peer-led initiatives. Connect with older adults by developing skills in storytelling, cultural exchange, and collaborative project facilitation.

Collaborators: youth centres, educational institutions, mentorship providers, senior-serving organizations, community centres, and housing providers.

Tools/Resources: Matchmaking platforms for mentorship.

Organize and lead intergenerational events such as game nights, art collaborations, or technology workshops that bridge generational gaps.

Collaborators: Libraries, community centres, and assisted living facilities/retirement homes.

Tools/Resources: Skill-sharing events.

Take on leadership roles by facilitating workshops, mentoring others, and earning certifications in community development.

Co-design solutions to address intergenerational differences and align on priorities.

Collaborators: Career development agencies, municipal programs, and funding organizations.

Tools/Resources: Certification, mentorship guidelines, and relevant toolkits

Professional Mentorship and Networking Skills Pathway

Plan your career by attending workshops, working with a coach, and creating a strong resume and cover letter. Practice interview skills through mock interviews.

Collaborators: Career development agencies, employment resource centres, and educational institutions.

Tools/Resources: Goal-setting templates, resume and cover letter guides, mock interview materials, and career assessment tools.

Build confidence and enhance your ability to make a positive impression by joining networking workshops where you will learn how to introduce yourself and build connections. Practice these skills and expand your network by engaging in peer-to-peer networking activities in a supportive environment.

Collaborators: Youth employment programs, business mentorship groups, and local chambers of commerce.

Tools/Resources: Workshop materials, role-play exercises, and access to digital networking platforms.

Expand your network and discover various career paths by attending industry panels, career fairs, and networking events. Sign up for mentorship programs and get personalized career advice and insights from professionals.

Collaborators: Professional associations, trade organizations, and local innovation hubs.

Tools/Resources: Online mentorship platform access, event entry support, and guidance on initiating mentor relationships.

Create a strong online presence by building a LinkedIn profile, digital portfolio, or personal website to showcase your skills and experiences. To further highlight your achievements, participate in pitch events, portfolio showcases, or public speaking opportunities to demonstrate your expertise and increase your visibility.

Collaborators: Digital marketing agencies, business incubators, and local media outlets.

Tools/Resources: Online profile-building resources, content creation tools, and access to branding workshops.

A Journey to Employment and Empowerment in Yellowknife

Based on discussions during the event and analysis of community data, several key skills development pathways were identified for youth in Yellowknife:

- **Career Exploration:** Developing job shadowing and mentorship programs tailored to local industries such as mining, food service, and social services.
- **Financial Literacy:** Offering workshops on budgeting, savings, and financial planning to empower youth with essential money management skills.
- **Land-Based Skills Integration:** Creating opportunities for youth to leverage traditional knowledge for income generation, such as eco-tourism or cultural education.
- **Leadership Development:** Encouraging youth participation in community decision-making and leadership roles to foster confidence and advocacy skills.

Adapting ESDC Skills for Success Model to the Yellowknife context

A key challenge during the Yellowknife Fall Gathering was adapting the Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) Skills for Success framework to the unique cultural and contextual realities of the youth in Yellowknife, the majority of whom were Indigenous.

One of the sponsoring partners in Yellowknife, The Tree of Peace Friendship Centre, had been working for more than a year with Elders and community partners to develop a **Youth Skills Recognition Booklet** based upon four questions posed by the Honourable Murray Sinclair. There are important similarities and differences between the Indigenous (Dene) youth skills framework and the Skills for Success Framework as illustrated below. As seen in the visual, some skills outlined in the ESDC framework, such as problem-solving, collaboration, and communication, are aligned with the skills identified from a Dene perspective. It is also worth noting that the Dene Youth Skills Framework takes a strengths-based approach, emphasizes leadership and has integrated cultural values and teachings. For example, land-based skills and traditional knowledge—critical aspects of many youths' identities and potential career paths—did not directly map onto the ESDC framework. However, these skills are integral to fostering a sense of connection to culture and community.

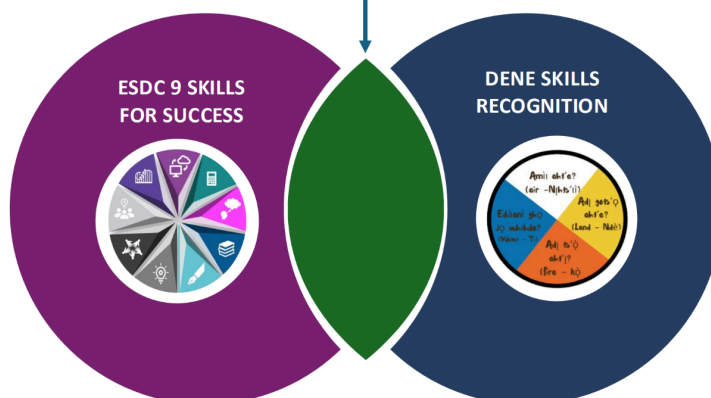
Two-Eyed Seeing

ALIGNMENT IN THE SKILLS

- Adaptability
- Communication
- Creativity & Innovation
- Problem-solving
- Innovation
- Development Focus

ESDC 9 SKILLS FOR SUCCESS

- Individual Focus
- Digital Skills
- Numeracy Skills
- Reading Skills
- Writing Skills



HAZHQ ETEXÉ LETS' EÈZHE

We Are All Connected | We Learn & Grow Together

- Acknowledges gifts & talents
- Individual AND Collective Focus
- Emphasizes Leadership
- Connection & Responsibility to Land
- Integrates Cultural Values & Teachings

SOURCE: [ESDC Canada](#)

SOURCE: [Tree of Peace Friendship Centre](#)

A Journey to Employment and Empowerment in Whitehorse

According to the ‘What’s up with Work, Lately?’ survey, youth in Whitehorse reported being equally interested in pursuing ‘art, culture, traditional knowledge and sport’, ‘business, finance and administration’, and ‘education, law and social, community and government services’. Currently, they were most likely to work in ‘education, law and social, community and government services’, with the next most popular sector being ‘health occupations’. In the future, Whitehorse youth reported wanting to work for a small for-profit company with the next most popular answer being a position in the territorial or federal government. Currently, youth were most likely to work in the territorial government, with the next most common answer being a small, not-for-profit or charity.



Territorial/Federal government services: education, law, social and community services

As mentioned above, the Territorial Youth Strategy (TYS) priorities encompass education and employment. These priorities were developed between 2020-2024 by and for Yukon youth, with support from a variety of youth-centred organizations and adult allies. In the TYS document, the team writes, “young people must be the primary creators of the TYS and continue to lead the TYS process. This means increasing the accessibility of youth panels, councils, and committees, and ensuring they go beyond the purpose of ‘checking a box for youth engagement’. It means providing opportunities for youth to take on leadership roles and create change outside of youth panels and councils, such as ...providing youth with meaningful positions at all levels of government (Municipal, Territorial, Federal, First Nation) [which] helps to ensure that youth perspectives and concerns are represented and reflected across all government work”. The Education and Employment working group has taken on that mission and is beginning to create actionable goals around increasing youth leadership in government, especially as it relates to education and social services; two fields that greatly impact the outcomes of young people.



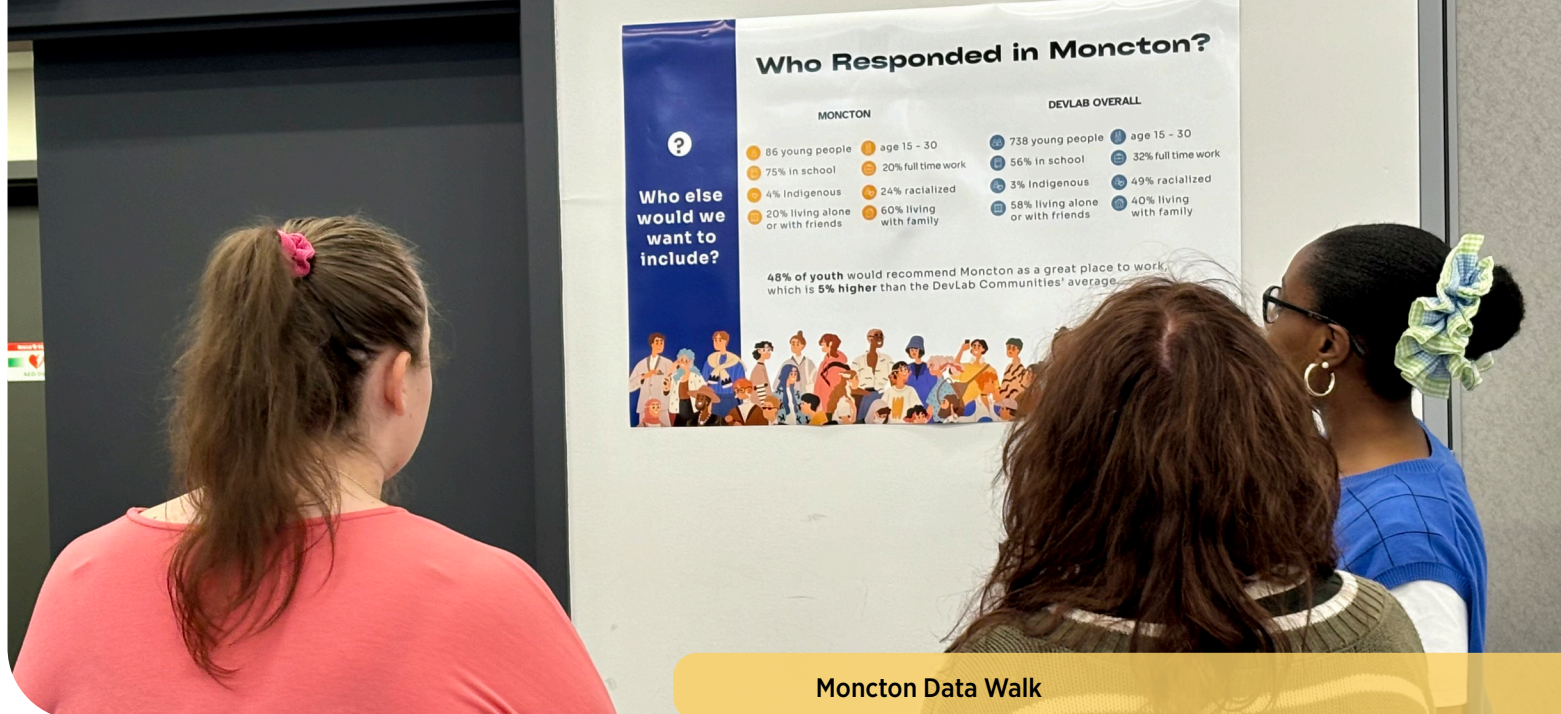
Art, culture, traditional knowledge, and sport

The TYS team has also chosen to prioritize traditional Indigenous Knowledge and healthy connection to the land after years of consultation with Yukon youth. The TYS document highlights the importance of strong cultural connection for youth through cultural support workers, mentors, and paid positions. The team vowed to, “Engage positive role models to be more involved in young peoples’ lives, particularly those that represent underserved demographics such as First Nations, female, queer, and gender-diverse role models”. They also mentioned the importance of Elders and knowledge-keepers as well as healthy guardians and adult support systems. This connection can not only meet the mental and spiritual needs of young people, but it can also result in greater youth employment in arts, culture, and land-based careers. The TYS team specifically highlighted firekeeper training, land-based teaching, and Indigenous-led climate action as examples.



Entrepreneurship

In the ‘What’s up with Work, Lately?’ survey, 83% of youth reported they would be open or very open to starting their own business. However, the majority of youth reported that hustle culture- which encourages young people to work extra hours to get ahead financially- is toxic and leads to burnout. The TYS team addresses this struggle with their strong focus on mental health support both in education and employment settings, as well as a desire to include more life skills and work-life balance training in schools. The TYS team will “create more curricular and extracurricular opportunities which explore essential ‘life skills’. Specifically: finances (budgeting and taxes), navigating systems (healthcare, purchasing or renting homes, awareness of community resources), driving skills, communication skills, and social and emotional learning”.



Moncton Data Walk

A Journey to Employment and Empowerment in Moncton



Career exploration and employment skills

It is important to equip youth with foundational employment skills and guide them through their career development journey as follows:

- **Job Readiness Workshops:** Sessions covering workplace expectations, professional conduct, time management, and teamwork.
- **Career Coaching:** One-on-one sessions to help youth identify career interests, strengths, and goals. Guidance on career path options within various sectors (e.g., tech, trades, healthcare, etc.).
- **Resume Writing and Interview Prep:** Workshops to assist youth in creating professional resumes, preparing for job interviews, and understanding how to present themselves effectively to employers.
- **Work Placements and Internships:** Partnerships with local businesses to offer work placements, internships, or apprenticeships that provide hands-on experience and real-world exposure to different industries.



Community engagement and leadership

It is necessary to develop youth leadership abilities and strengthen their sense of social responsibility.

- **Youth Leadership Opportunities:** Facilitate leadership programs where youth can take on roles in planning and executing local initiatives, events, or projects.
- **Advisory Roles:** Involve youth in advisory committees or boards that provide input on local policy, programs, or community projects, helping them build decision-making and advocacy skills.
- **Community Service Projects:** Encourage youth to participate in or lead community-based volunteer efforts, helping them understand the importance of giving back and collaborating for positive change in their neighborhoods.



Digital literacy and tech skills

Youth need to be equipped with the required digital skills for today's job market.

- **Digital Marketing Training:** Offer courses in digital marketing, content creation, email marketing, and analytics tools to help youth gain practical knowledge of online advertising and brand promotion.



Moncton Data Wak

- **Social Media Management:** Deliver workshops on managing social media platforms professionally, including content strategy, audience engagement, and crisis management in digital spaces.
- **IT Skills Training:** Provide foundational courses in IT, including coding, software usage, cybersecurity basics, and networking, preparing youth for a variety of tech-focused careers.
- **Data Management Training:** Offer specialized workshops in data entry, analysis, and visualization using tools like Excel, Google Analytics, or Tableau to prepare youth for careers in data-related fields.



Advocacy

Youth have to be empowered to become active participants in shaping social and political discourse.

- **Policy Engagement Workshops:** Teach youth about policy development, advocacy strategies, and how to engage with policymakers on issues that matter to them and their communities.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** Involve youth in designing and executing campaigns to raise awareness about social, environmental, or political issues, encouraging them to use their voices to spark change.
- **Youth Activism Training:** Provide training on grassroots organizing, lobbying, and using media

tools to support causes, preparing youth to lead advocacy efforts in their communities.



Networking and professional development

Building strong professional connections and developing communication skills for career success are valuable for young people.

- **Career Fairs and Job Expositions:** Organize events where youth can meet employers, learn about job opportunities, and network with professionals from various fields.
- **Mentorship Programs:** Match youth with experienced professionals who can provide guidance, career advice, and valuable industry insights, fostering long-term relationships for career development.
- **Networking Events:** Host events where youth can practice networking skills, connect with industry experts, and expand their professional circles.
- **Professional Communication Training:** Offer workshops on business communication, including writing professional emails, conducting formal presentations, and speaking confidently in interviews or meetings.

LESSONS LEARNED

Community engagement and partnerships

- Smaller, focused events with clear outcomes lead to deeper engagement than large, general gatherings.
- Strong relationships with local organizations and Collaborators improve program reach and sustainability.
- Partnerships across sectors are essential to address systemic issues (e.g., housing affordability, workplace inclusivity).
- Collaboration across sectors ensures solutions are comprehensive and have widespread support.

Skills development and employment

- Employer engagement is key to understanding workplace challenges and creating employment pathways.
- Skills development should align with emerging industries (e.g., green jobs, digital skills) and include mentorship and credential recognition.
- Equitable digital access, including technology and internet, is vital for youth preparing for modern employment.

Youth empowerment and leadership

- Youth-led initiatives result in more relevant and impactful solutions, so youth should be empowered to advocate for themselves and their communities.
- Tailored approaches are necessary to ensure cultural relevance, especially for Indigenous youth and marginalized communities, as challenges and opportunities vary across cities.
- Networking opportunities, especially for marginalized groups, are essential to overcome career advancement barriers.

Support services and policies

- Integrated youth hubs that combine education, mental health, and employment services provide holistic support.
- Mental health resources must be integrated into education and employment frameworks to effectively support youth.
- Systemic biases in hiring and workplace culture require sustained equity, diversity, inclusion, justice, and reconciliation efforts.
- Rising costs in housing, education, and transportation require targeted policies to reduce the financial strain on youth.
- Smaller cities face unique challenges due to fragmented support systems, necessitating tailored interventions.

An **open data** index assessing the state of work for young people in **30 Canadian cities**.

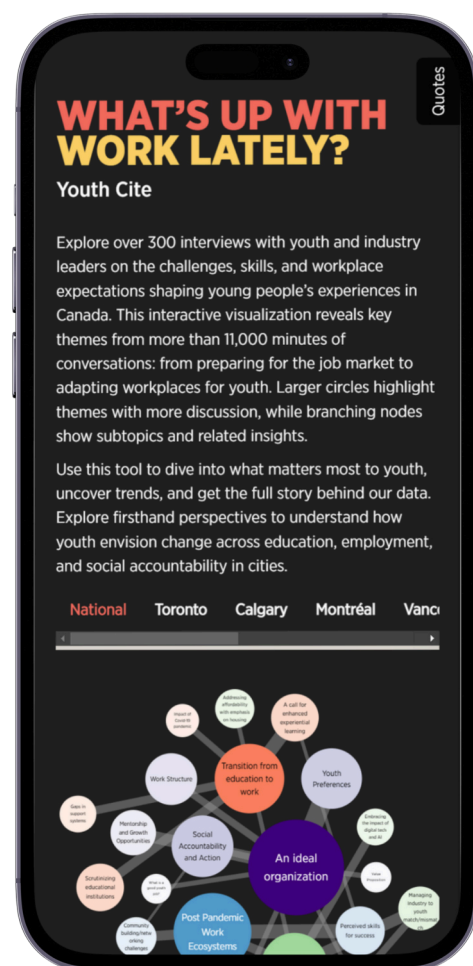
- 9226 data points
- 248 unique measures
- 120 youth-focussed measures



Dan Alferov (Youthful Cities), featuring the results of the Urban Work Index 2024 on Youth Data Lab.

FUTURE WORK

- Strengthen partnerships with employers to align youth skills with workforce needs and promote equity-focused hiring practices.
- Plan and design more tailored projects which revolve around the interconnectedness of youth mental health, affordability (emphasis on housing), and skills development and employability.
- Collaborate with cities to develop localized skills pathways tailored to unique industries and sectors.
- Support initiatives which increase access to experiential learning opportunities, including internships, co-ops, and mentorships.
- Advocate for policies that address systemic barriers encountered by young people within work ecosystems across Canada.
- Support youth-led initiatives with seed funding and resources to empower their leadership and innovation.
- Increase the awareness around the challenges encountered by young people in Canada and engage in ongoing data-sharing among organizations, youth, and policy-makers through the expansion of the [Youth Data Lab](#).



CONCLUSION

This second report reinforces the importance of community-centred approaches in addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by youth in Canada. It highlights the transformative potential of youth-driven solutions, co-designed with community partners, to foster equitable workforce development, inclusive urban policies, and collective growth. The collaborative frameworks and skills pathways outlined herein serve as a blueprint for cities, organizations, and local actors to empower their young populations while addressing systemic inequities.

By emphasizing lessons learned, such as the value of localized interventions, and smaller, more focused events, the report sets the stage for ongoing efforts that are both impactful and scalable. The insights shared affirm that empowering youth is not just about addressing immediate needs, but about building resilient, inclusive cities where young people can thrive as leaders, innovators, and changemakers.

Looking forward, the findings call for deeper engagement with employers, policymakers, and community Collaborators to translate insights into lasting action. Strengthening partnerships, fostering equity-focused initiatives, and scaling successful models will be critical to ensuring that urban centres across Canada are equipped to meet the aspirations of their youngest residents. Together, these efforts lay the groundwork for a future where every young person in Canada has the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to their community and beyond.