



Shaping the Canada Service Corps through Prototyping Phase 2 Report October 2018

From January to October 2018, Canada Service Corps engaged over 800 diverse youth from coast to coast to coast to seek their help with co-creating a national signature program for youth service. During Phase 1, we provided a space for youth to brainstorm with other young Canadians, build upon each other's ideas and come up with proposed solutions to some of the common barriers they currently face to serving their communities. In Phase 2 of the engagement with youth, these solutions took shape as prototypes, and we asked youth to refine their ideas into tangible program elements.

In collaboration with the Students Commission of Canada, we extended our reach to local communities across the country and to youth furthest away from opportunity, including First Nations, Inuit and Métis youth, LGBTQ2+, rural and remote youth, newcomer youth, and youth with disabilities (see Annex A.)

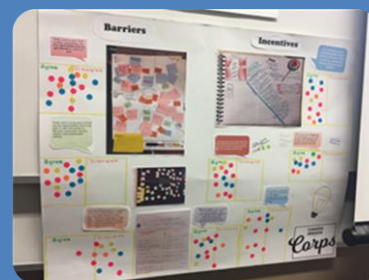
The findings in this report continue to build upon what youth have told us they want from a national signature program, including proposed incentives, mentorship models and a digital platform that would help youth access service opportunities and guide them along their service journey.

Some of the recurring insights we heard from young Canadians that could support a national youth service program in Canada include:

- ❖ Establish a digital platform that allows youth to track and tailor their service journey;
- ❖ Leverage existing organizations or infrastructure to provide in-person assistance for youth with limited internet access;
- ❖ Provide different types of financial incentives, such as a living allowances, to help reduce the financial barriers of participating in an immersive service opportunity;
- ❖ Collaborate with organizations and program partners to create a mentorship program for youth available virtually and in-person; and,
- ❖ Create an interactive digital platform that includes elements such as gamification to promote greater youth and civic engagement.



Figure 1 - CSCorps used dot-mocracy to validate insights from Phase 1 with youth across Canada.



Theme 1: Incentives

Prototyping Solutions to Potential Barriers to Youth Service

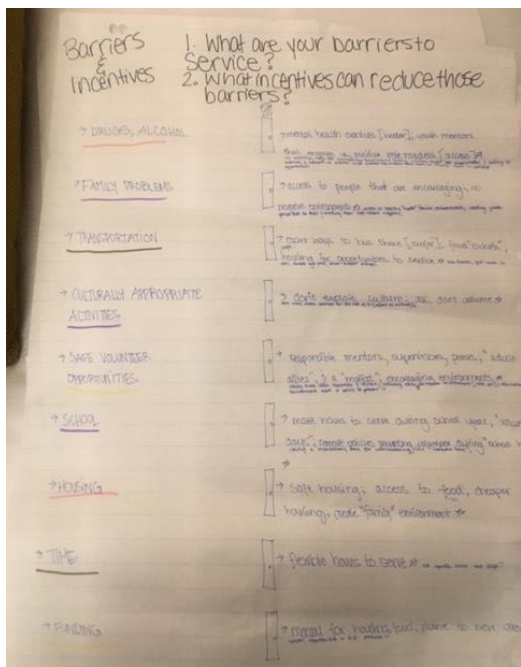


Figure 2 - Youth used doors to explain barriers and map out solutions and incentives.

In Phase 2, Canada Service Corps prototyped some potential ideas of financial and non-financial incentives with young Canadians in an effort to reduce some of the barriers to service affecting youth between the ages of 15 and 30.

Tuition Voucher

Barrier to Service #1: Youth pursuing post-secondary education or training are experiencing financial constraints.

Proposed Solution: Participants in immersive service opportunities would be eligible to receive a tuition voucher upon completion of their program. Youth pursuing post-secondary or training could use their financial support to pay tuition or course related expenses.

Considerations: A delivery agent will need to be identified who can administer tuition vouchers upon program completion, as well as clearly defined eligibility criteria.

Living Allowance

Barrier to Service #2: Young Canadians lack time and financial stability to pursue an immersive service program.

Proposed Solution: Provide a living allowance to participants

exclusively serving for an extended period to cover the cost associated with rent, meals, transportation and childcare if needed.

Considerations: Host organizations administering service projects could administer the living allowance directly. Allocated allowances will need to factor in different individual needs (such as childcare expenses), as well as varying costs of living across the country. Youth have also expressed the need for a transportation allowance for all youth registered through a program with the Canada Service Corps.

Mental Health/Well-being Support:

Barrier to Service #3: Some youth are facing mental health problems or illnesses that prevent them from participating in service opportunities.

Proposed Solution: Include mental health supports for program participants, such as having access to in-person support within host organizations who are certified in mental health first aid training, having access to virtual supports (through a digital platform or by telephone), and partnering with organizations in the mental health services sector, to leverage existing crisis lines and walk in clinic, which offer a confidential space for youth to use at their convenience.

Considerations: Youth reinforced the importance of working with different levels of government responsible for health services, and the importance of ensuring that individuals offering counselling services are accredited individuals who are certified to do so. Youth also want preventative mental health measures to be implemented and want access to more resources and information that promotes wellness.

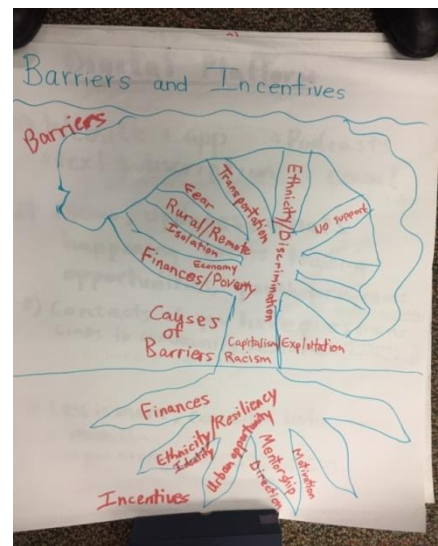


Figure 3 - Financial and non-financial incentives help to address barriers to service.

Accreditation

Barrier to Service #4: Youth have expressed that they are busy time with after-school activities and other responsibilities, which reduces their ability to serve

their community.

Proposed Solution: Young Canadians have expressed an interest to participate in service learning within their schools. Youth want to have community service learning available as an optional course, during which they can lead or collaborate on a community-led project or volunteer for a local organization.

Considerations: While youth understand that formalizing service learning within the school system could be challenging, they continue to emphasize the importance of creating a space during school hours during which they can serve their community, particularly in provincial and territorial jurisdictions that have implemented mandatory volunteer hours to complete high school.

Recognition

Barrier to Service #5: Some youth expressed that they feel underappreciated for their service and want to be formally recognized for their service hours.

Proposed Solution: Simple acts of recognizing someone's efforts and contributions go a long way. A digital badge or reward system within an online platform is appealing to youth as a form of recognition, as it would also allow youth to track their service hours. For others, formal recognition is not sought after and they give back because they want to make a difference and help others in their community.

Considerations: While recognition is not important for all youth, showcasing the contributions of young Canadians by sharing the stories and impact of their service journeys can serve as a form of recognition and inspire other youth to get involved. Recognition can also help volunteer retention in organizations and help to foster deeper engagement.



"I was recognized by my local newspaper for my work with JCRs. It was cool to be recognized and I kept the article."

– Youth participant at the Junior Canadian Rangers Training Camp

Figure 4 – Canada Service Corps used Journey Maps to better understand barriers youth face in their service journey.

Theme 2: Mentorship

Linking Youth to Peers and Adult-Allies

Mentorship takes many shapes and forms, family, friends, elders and educators, and noted the importance of having someone to turn to "advocate for change" or "bridge-builder", to help create a supportive space that fosters a sense of value and belonging amongst youth, and having someone who challenges your ideas to help foster growth. Mentorship can offer support and guidance to youth during their service journey. Youth have told us that having a caring and supportive individual, whether an adult or a peer is important to them, but often, they do not have access to someone to serve in this capacity.

Building upon what we had previously heard from youth, during Phase 2, we asked young Canadians to validate some of the key characteristics of mentorship models, including how they would like to access mentors and the role they could play in their service journey.

Connect via Digital Platform: Young Canadians expressed an interest to have access to a database of mentors integrated in the Canada Service Corps digital platform by which youth can select a match.

Connect by telephone: Youth want flexible meeting arrangement, and may not have access to transportation, particularly in rural and remote areas.

Programming available in Schools: Young Canadians expressed an interest in having access to a mentorship program in high school to help youth get involved in service and provide them with support and guidance.

Organizations where they currently serve: Youth who are volunteering for organizations do not always get the guidance and support they need and organizations often do not have resources to mentor youth.

Community Meet-up Program: Schools, community centres, cultural centres and other locations where youth typically gather would be the ideal locations for community meet-ups. Youth mentioned the importance of these meet-ups to be safe and organized by reliable and credible organizations, institutions or individuals.

Time-length/ Frequency: Youth have different needs, and some may require more frequent meetings with their mentors than others (weekly or monthly), while others may only require mentorship on an ad-hoc basis.

The Role of the Mentor: Youth expressed that having mentors available to those who are interested in serving their community or launching their own service initiative would be extremely beneficial. The mentor could serve as a sounding board who could guide them on how to find new service opportunities; teach them new skills, help to connect them to other peers and organizations and help to build their self-confidence.



Figure 5 - Young Canadians have busy schedules at any stage of life. Meet youth on their time.

"It would be good to be flexible so that youth can decide what works best for them."

- Youth participant from Ontario on the Provincial and Territorial Youth Gathering, hosted in partnership with WE Canada

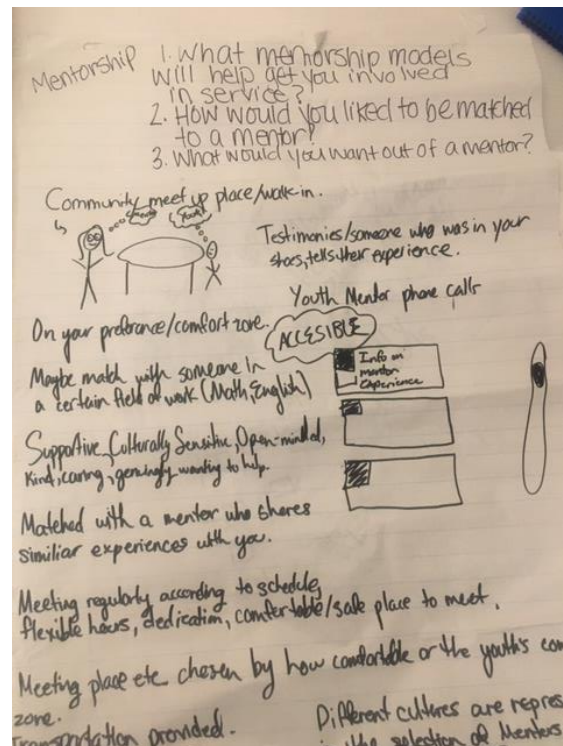


Figure 6 - Young Canadians are seeking mentors through a digital platform and in-person community meet-ups.

Theme 3: Digital Platform

Building a Digital Platform to Navigate Through Service Journey

Youth prototyped a one-stop shop to find all resources, tools and information they require to track and navigate through their service journey. Young Canadians described existing platforms with algorithms that are tailored based on their interests. Youth are eager and interested in participating and/or creating service projects in their community.

Prototypes presented to youth included some key features and functionalities of a digital platform, including game design elements (gamification) and youth-friendly content. Both a website and app are of interest to youth interested in serving their community.

Look & Feel: Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter and LinkedIn have simple and clear branding and platform layouts. Youth have prototyped websites and apps with similar features and functionalities, keeping it simple and intuitive. Youth designed prototypes with a profile page, newsfeed, service opportunities and grants page and a toolbox with resources and tools to support their service journey.

Profile

Youth want the platform's profile to be uniquely designed by the individual with information including:

- ☐ Profile picture or avatar
- ☐ Hours tracked and approved by organizations they served
- ☐ Information about experience, skills and education level
- ☐ Areas of interest
- ☐ Rewards, recognition, earned badges and recognition
- ☐ Messaging feature
- ☐ Connections

Account privacy settings would allow youth to put limits on information being shared with the public, friends or organizations looking for volunteers.

Newsfeed

Youth want to sign up to the platform, and have tailored information and opportunities of interest on their feed. The newsfeed would provide opportunities within their desired location and specified interests (skills building, mentorship, workshops, etc.). Youth would also like to view testimonies of other youth serving across Canada through blog or vlog posts.

Service opportunities & grants

This platform page would include opportunities and grants that might interest the user. Prototypes included images more than text. Opportunities would be displayed through thumbnails that would bring the user directly to the sign up form or application. Youth also want this page to provide tips and tools to support the application process.

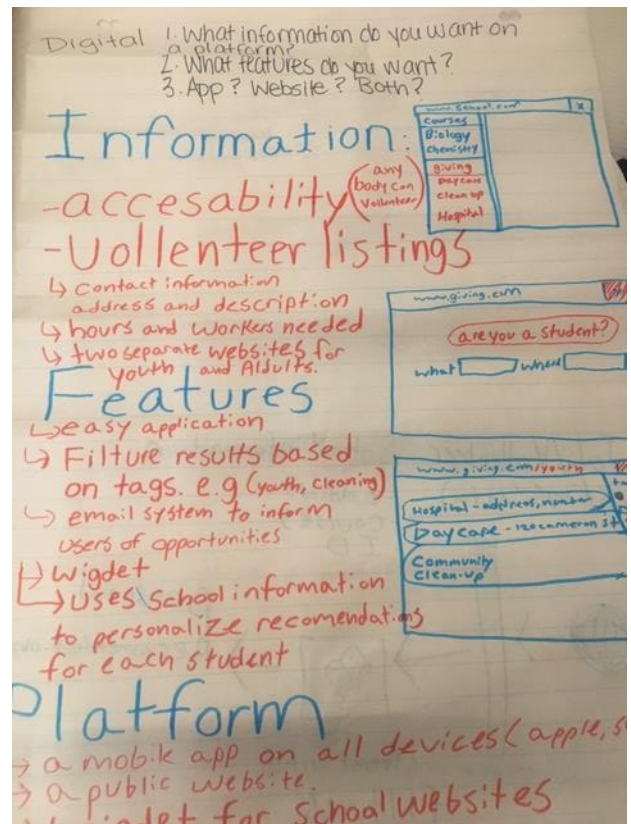


Figure 5 - Clean and simple layouts will entice youth to use the digital platform.

Resources

Youth want a specific area on the digital platform that would support and enhance their service journey. This section could include access to rewards, recognition, mentors, financial support and mental health/well-being support. Prototypes were simple and seamless to ensure that the user can see all the tools and resources provided by the platform to enrich their service journey.

Gamification: Young Canadians have expressed an interest to add gamification aspects to the digital platform. Gamification consists of elements of game playing such as point scoring, competition with others and rules to play by. It is often used as an online marketing technique to encourage engagement with a service. From leveling up as you track service hours to challenging friends to complete service-oriented challenges, the platform should be interactive and allow youth to receive rewards and recognition as they navigate through their service journey.



Figure 6 - From tailoring their profile to leveling up as they track hours, young Canadians are eager to have a centralized digital platform.

Promotion: Young Canadians are using social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter and LinkedIn to seek information of interest and opportunities. Sponsored advertisement through these platforms would attract a wide-range of youth from different backgrounds. Users are more likely to click on a post that is being promoted on a consistent basis. To enhance the advertisement, youth have encouraged using call to actions or challenges to entice the user to click on the post for more information.

Youth have busy schedules with school, work, childcare responsibilities and other priorities. Youth still attending secondary and post-secondary institutions have encouraged leveraging schools and places where youth typically congregate such as community centres, cafés and libraries. Youth mentioned leveraging public sector institutions such as employment centres, health centres and municipal buildings to promote the program for all youth, especially youth with limited internet access.

Offline feature: In general, youth have expressed their interest in a digital platform to track and tailor their service journey. Youth with limited or no internet access agreed that a centralized website would allow youth to acquire the information, tools and resources they need to get started and stay engaged. One recommendation would be the ability to use the platform, through an app, offline. They would be able to enter their hours and use some features that do not require internet access. Once they have reliable access, the information would sync and they could redeem rewards, recognition or connect with more opportunities.

Where We Went

| Where | When | Number of participants |
|---|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| Girl Guides of Canada Youth Council Annual General Assembly (Montreal, QC) | June 3, 2018 | 12 |
| Canadian Commission for UNESCO Youth Advisory Committee Annual General Assembly (Ottawa, ON) | June 5, 2018 | 17 |
| GC Youth Service Design Jam (Gatineau, QC) | June 13, 2018 | 30 |
| DND: Cadets Training Camp (Whitehorse, YK) | July 16-17, 2018 | 15 |
| National Association of Friendship Centres National Youth Forum (Ottawa, ON) | July 14, 2018 | 30 |
| Students Commission of Canada (multiple locations) | Summer 2018 | 200 |
| 1. RMYC (Indigenous and Newcomer) (Thunder Bay, ON) | July 4, 2018 | |
| 2. Wisdom2Action (youth with diverse mental health experiences) (Dartmouth, NS) | July 5, 2018 | |
| 3. YMCA du Québec (Francophone youth) (Montréal, QC) | July 5, 2018 | |
| 4. SCC (Indigenous Youth and Youth with low SES) (Saskatoon, SK) | July 5, 2018 | |
| 5. BYTE (Northern Youth and Rural Youth) (Whitehorse, YK) | July 6, 2018 | |
| 6. Tree of Life (Yellowknife, NWT) | July 10, 2018 | |
| 7. Generation XX (Rural Youth) (Summerside, PEI) | July 10, 2018 | |
| 8. SCC (Racialized Youth and LGBTQ Youth) (Toronto, ON) | July 12, 2018 | |
| 9. Maisons des Jeunes (Francophone/Acadien Youth) (Dieppe, NB) | July 17, 2018 | |
| 10. Choices for Youth (St. John's, NFLD) | July 18, 2018 | |
| 11. SCC (Racialized Youth and LGBTQ Youth) (Toronto, ON) | July 19, 2018 | |
| 12. Golden Youth Centre (Golden, BC) | July 19, 2018 | |
| 13. Y2KFLA (youth with diverse abilities) (Kingston, ON) | July 19, 2018 | |
| 14. Ma Mama Wi Chi Itata (Winnipeg, MB) | July 20, 2018 | |
| 15. Big Brothers, Big Sisters and Boys and Girls Club (Edmonton, AB) | July 26, 2018 | |
| 16. Inuit and North Youth, (Iqaluit, NU) | July 25, 2018 | |
| 17. Youth with disabilities (Kingston, ON) | August 2, 2018 | |
| 18. Geographically diverse youth (Virtual) | August 13, 2018 | |
| 19. Geographically diverse youth (Virtual) | August 15, 2018 | |
| Duke of Edinburgh International Award – Canada-Passion to Purpose Youth Leadership Forum (Regina, Saskatchewan) | August 14, 2018 | 90 |
| DND: Junior Canadian Rangers Training Camp (Gros Morne, NFLD) | August 16-17, 2018 | 15 |
| 4-H Canada Youth Leaders (Virtual) | August 22, 2018 | 7 |
| #LeadersToday Global Youth Service Summit (Toronto, ON) | August 26-28, 2018 | 25 |
| Canada Service Corps Provincial and Territorial Virtual Youth Gathering (Virtual) | August 29, 2018 | 25 |
| Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française (FJCF) Annual General Meeting (Ottawa, ON) | September 7, 2018 | 25 |
| Congress of Aboriginal Peoples National Youth Council - Annual General Assembly (Ottawa, ON) | September 18, 2018 | 12 |
| Chantiers jeunesse Youth Meeting (Mont-Tremblant, QC) | September 29, 2018 | 14 |
| Total participants in Phase 2 | July-September 2018 | 517 |
| Total participants in Phase 1 and Phase 2 | January-September 2018 | 837 |

Where We Are Going From Here

The shared experiences and recommendations we have heard from young Canadians, including those furthest away from opportunity has shaped our way forward and will guide the third and final phase of engagement with stakeholders to test and validate program elements that could help to create a program that is more accessible and inclusive for all young Canadians.

Stay tuned!



Want to get involved and stay in touch? Learn more at: Canada.ca/canadaservicecorps and don't forget to use #LeadersToday and #CanadaServiceCorps.

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#CANADAWEWANT

YOUTH INPUT INTO THE CANADA SERVICE CORPS



SUMMARY

This report reflects the voices of over 200 young people from coast to coast to coast who attended 20 workshops (in-person and online) July and August 2018. During these workshops, youth were involved in shaping the development of Canada Service Corps (CSC). Youth participants at these workshops were primarily from populations furthest away from opportunity: Indigenous, LGBTQ, racialized, youth experiencing homelessness, youth living in rural, remote and Northern communities,

and youth with diverse abilities. As such, the youth-generated recommendations and input detailed in this report were developed through a lens of social inclusion and accessibility. Youth participants were thankful for the opportunity to be heard in the development of this initiative and—feel hopeful that the final product will reflect their experiences and insight, ultimately achieving a Canada in which *all* young people are able to have meaningful service opportunities.



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Acknowledgments

Thank you first to the courageous young people from coast to coast to coast who attended workshops and provided input into the Canada Service Corps (CSC) to build the #CanadaWeWant so we can have the #CanadaWeNeed.

With representatives from First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities from across the country, we humbly gathered on traditional territories across Turtle Island. Between July 1 and August 20, 2018, 20 workshop sessions were delivered in every province and territory. Through acknowledgement and respect, we recognized the enduring presence of Indigenous Peoples on this land and were very grateful to have the opportunity to use it as a meeting place, and a space for knowledge sharing.

These sessions were delivered by the Students Commission and in partnership with local youth-serving organizations: Regional Multicultural Youth Centre (Thunder Bay, ON), Wisdom 2 Action (Halifax, NS), YMCA du Quebec Centreville (Montreal, QC), Big Brothers Big Sisters (Saskatoon, SK, Edmonton, AB), BYTE (Whitehorse, YK), Tree of Life (Yellowknife, NWT), GenerationXX (Summerside, PEI), Maisons des Jeunes (Dieppe, NB), Pathways to Education (Kingston, ON), Community Living Kingston (Kingston, ON), Golden Youth Centre (Golden, BC), Ma Mama Wi Chi Itata (Winnipeg, MB), the Boys and Girls Club/Big Brothers Big Sisters of Edmonton (Edmonton, AB), and the City of Iqaluit, (NU).

Thank you to Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) for supporting the participation of youth from across the country and for asking us to provide our voice into the Canada Service Corps. Thank you to the youth facilitators, adult-allies and the federal government representatives that attended the workshops and will continue to support the development of the Canada Service Corps.



Executive Summary

This report reflects the voices of over 200 young people from coast to coast to coast who attended 19 workshops (in-person and online) July and August 2018 were involved in shaping the development of Canada Service Corps (CSC), a program administered by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC). The youth participants at these workshops were primarily from populations furthest away from opportunity: Indigenous, LGBTQ, racialized, youth experiencing homelessness, youth living in rural, remote and Northern communities, and youth with diverse abilities. As such, the youth-generated recommendations and input detailed in this report were developed through a lens of social inclusion and accessibility. Youth participants were thankful for the opportunity to be heard in the development of this initiative and feel hopeful that the final product will reflect their experiences and insight, ultimately achieving a Canada in which *all* young people are able to have meaningful service opportunities.



Youth participants at the workshops shared that they **hold reservations** as to whether the Canada Service Corps applies to their day-to-day realities. In their experience, service opportunities are often inaccessible due to various barriers such as cost and lack of transportation. The recommendations put forth in this report aim to expand the reach of the CSC so that every youth in Canada is able to participate in service activities and receive mentorship.

Methodology

Background

ESDC reached out to the SCC shortly after the CSC was launched in January 2018. ESDC supported a theme group on Youth Service and Volunteerism at the SCC's annual #CanadaWeWant youth conference. Therefore, the first stage of obtaining data occurred at the 2018 #CanadaWeWant Conference, where youth participants from all over Canada participated in a week-long conference to share their voice about a variety of topics. The conference included thematic groups that explored youth service/volunteerism. The conference culminated in each theme group producing a report (see Annex) with a set of distinct recommendations related to their topic of discussion.

Report Context

Following the conference, ESDC reached out to the SCC to support on-going engagement of youth furthest away from opportunity so that they could provide input into the CSC. A workshop guide was developed. 19 workshops were delivered across the country in every province and territory between July and August

2018 in Thunder Bay, ON Halifax, NS, Montreal (x2), QC, Saskatoon, SK, Whitehorse, YT, Yellowknife, NWT, Summerside, PEI, Toronto (x2), ON, Dieppe, NB, St. John's, NFL, Kingston (x2), Golden, BC, Winnipeg, MB, Edmonton, AB, Iqaluit, NU, and two national online webinars. In total, over 200 participants provided input into the recommendations made in this report. The activities were used as prompts to produce thoughtful reflections of the current and future state of young people in Canada. A note-taker from the federal government or the SCC was present at each workshop in order to record the comments of the youth participants.

The populations engaged were those furthest away from opportunity:

| Location | Targeted Group | Demographics (Age of participants) | Number of Participants |
|-----------------|---|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Thunder Bay, ON | Indigenous and Racialized | 13-25 | 10 |
| Halifax, NS | Diverse mix including racialized, LGBTQ, youth with diverse mental health needs | 14-23 | 6 |
| Montréal, QC | Francophone- LGBTQ, youth with diverse mental health needs | 14-28 | 15 (x2 sessions) |
| Saskatoon, SK | Indigenous, newcomer, racialized and low-income | 12-25 | 7 |
| Whitehorse, YT | Northern and Indigenous | 13-25 | 6 |
| Yellowknife | Northern and Indigenous | 12-25 | 6 |
| Summerside, PEI | Rural | 8-22 | 20 |

| | | | |
|-----------------|--|-------|--|
| Toronto, ON | LGBTQ, racialized, newcomers, diverse abilities, youth who experience homelessness | 14-25 | 20 (x3 sessions) |
| Dieppe, NB | Francophone, Acadian | 15-25 | 3 |
| St. John's, NFL | Youth experiencing homelessness, youth with diverse mental health needs/challenges | 14-24 | 3 |
| Kingston, ON | Newcomer, racialized, youth with diverse abilities, low-income | 14-25 | 16 (x2 sessions and one-on-one interviews with youth of diverse abilities) |
| Golden, BC | Rural | 13-20 | 6 |
| Winnipeg, MB | Indigenous | 12-25 | 25 |
| Edmonton, AB | A diverse mix | 12-25 | 4 |
| Iqaluit, NU | Northern, Indigenous | 14-25 | 6 |
| Online | A geographically diverse mix of youth living in 6 provinces and territories | 14-22 | 10 |

Data Collection and Analysis

The CSC workshop followed a methodological format grounded in interactive and age-appropriate activities. The workshop format was developed with youth from the priority populations and based on the key objectives outlined in an initial meeting with ESDC representatives in mid-June 2018.

After the workshops were completed, several SCC youth staff members sorted the note-takers information and presented it to a diverse team of adults, young people, and several government representatives in a data harvesting session. Common themes and unique needs based on geography and identity were identified and discussed. Visual elements to support the recommendations and prototypes were also developed.

Three follow-up workshops were held in August 2018 to validate and verify the themes generated through the data harvesting session.

Workshop Format



The CSC workshop ranged from 2-4 hours and involved a series of activities focused on conceptualizing and refining features of three prototypes: addressing barriers/incentives to service, the development of a digital platform for service and the creation of a national mentorship program for youth aged 15-29. To spark reflection on the concept of service, each CSC workshop began with an activity, the “Shrinking Island” during which youth participants considered their day-to-day lives and time spent doing service – whether it be service to themselves, their family and friends, or in their community.

At each workshop session, youth participants various discussed barriers and incentives to participating in service activities. Specific barriers and the populations facing them are detailed under the “Intersections” heading of each prototype.



How Young People Live Their Lives

Youth who are furthest away from opportunity made clear that the CSC will only be successful if it reaches all types of youth. Inclusive reach means that these initiatives will take into account and address the various barriers that prevent marginalized youth populations from experiencing service opportunities. The first step in addressing barriers is to understand how these young people live their lives. Below are the consistent themes youth furthest away from opportunity shared about their experiences of service.

Youth Experiences of Service



The following themes were consistently addressed by youth participants at the CSC workshops:

Youth are participating in service more than they think

Upon reflection, youth participants realized they are doing more service in their daily lives than they initially thought – service to themselves, their friends and family, the environment, and their community. While service is typically conceptualized as structured volunteering and community engagement, young people came to understand that they are serving at a personal level (e.g. caring for family members, acts-of-kindness, tutoring) and feel that this type of service should be both recognized and valued as a meaningful form of service engagement by young people and the Canada Service Corps.

Youth desire to make a local impact

Young people have a desire to do service activities in their community. Incentives to participate in these activities not only create motivation, but also dismantle barriers and make participation in these service activities worthwhile for youth who are balancing competing priorities such as working for money and may not be able to participate otherwise

Adults must trust youth

Young people don't always feel trusted by adults to do work in their communities. For example, many youth shared that they had wanted to address an issue in their community but when attempting to take action, adults were skeptical and unsupportive of their initiative. Some youth at the workshops also expressed that adults can be judgemental about their assumed capacity to do meaningful service. This judgement is especially present if youth are not already typical "model citizens" – to a degree, youth

furthest away from opportunity sometimes experience a self-fulfilling prophecy resulting in disengagement from service at the community level.

Youth do service at school

Youth participants expressed that they are more inclined to participate in service activities in spaces that they are already gathering, especially at school. For example, youth shared that they do service through participation on student councils and clubs.

Young People's Definition of Service

Youth participants at the workshops conveyed that “service” is a term they typically associate with contexts such as the military, mandatory hours required to graduate high school, and resources they seek for support. Through group reflections on what constitutes service in their daily activities, youth began to re-evaluate their understanding of the term.

The following themes were key elements of youth participants' definitions of service:

“While volunteering is like a job, service is like a career”

Service is an important experience

Informed by their experience, youth overwhelmingly expressed that service is of great value to both themselves and their communities. Service is not only a way to build one's CV, skills, and work experience, but also a way for youth to learn about themselves and their communities and build confidence. Service at the community level is important in building connected, inclusive and equitable communities, as service is a way to learn about people different from one's self. Service is separate from ad hoc volunteering opportunities. Service is a form of engagement that goes beyond participation and becomes part of one's lifestyle.

Service is the act of caring

Youth expressed that they understand service as the act of caring and making a contribution outside of one's self. Put differently, doing service is taking action on things that matter to make a positive change. This definition is directly connected to the definition of youth engagement by the Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement: the meaningful and sustained participation of a young person in an activity that is focused *outside of the self*.

Service supports inclusion

Newcomer and immigrant youth shared that to them, service is not necessarily about citizenship, but rather, supports their belonging in their (new) community. It also connects them to resources and supports in their community and helps them improve their communication skills if their second language is English or French.

Service does not require leadership

Some youth participants expressed that service and volunteering opportunities in their communities are targeted at youth who are perceived as leaders by adults, especially teachers. It is important that service mentors and adult allies uncover the implicit leadership that exists in young people, not the conventional leadership that is displayed by an elite few. Overt leadership skills should not be seen as a condition to making a contribution to something through service.

Doing service is often a privilege

Youth participants shared that engaging in community service activities is not always a realistic option for them when weighing their competing priorities – especially when these competing priorities involve making sure one's basic needs such as food and housing are met. Youth, especially those living in rural and remote communities, expressed that service opportunities are often located far away and they are unable to participate due to a lack of transportation. It is important that the CSC understands even if an opportunity to engage in service activities may exist, to participate is not necessary a choice that all youth have.

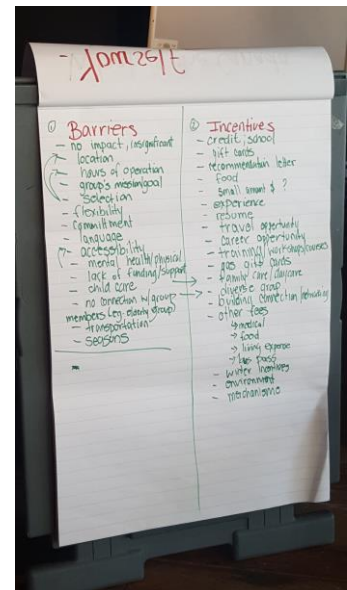
Younger youth (ages 10-13) want service opportunities

Youth participants stated that they believe youth are interested in engaging in their communities from a young age. In their opinion, having opportunities to do service as one enters the teenage years will foster positive self-esteem as well as the habits of volunteering and civic engagement.

Prototype 1: Barriers/Incentives to Service and Volunteerism

Youth furthest away from opportunity experience multiple and intersecting barriers to engage in service and volunteering activities. While a desire to participate in service activities often exists among youth in marginalized populations, these barriers result in disengagement and therefore distance youth from activities that may support their ability to improve their situation.

A principle of the CSC that emerged through this process is that **all youth should have the opportunity to be involved in service activities regardless of**



their personal circumstances. This principle is important because when marginalized youth become involved in their communities, they build skills that will support them in adulthood (e.g. securing employment) and further, become connected to resources, services, and opportunities in their community they were previously unaware of.

Building a Culture of Service

If the CSC is to be grounded in the principle that all young people are deserving of opportunities to do service, it is important to avoid the concern that providing incentives will change the culture of service i.e., service will no longer be an act of selflessness.

Incentives are *initiators*, a critical factor in engaging youth furthest away from opportunity (Please see www.youthwhothrive.ca for detailed research). In contrast, *sustainers* of engagement will be other features of an opportunity, such as their enjoyment of their participation, the relationships they build through their participation and an understanding of the value of service. In order for youth furthest away from opportunity to experience the various positive outcomes of engagement in service, incentives to participation will be a critical aspect of the CSC. Youth emphasized that why they show up to an opportunity (initiators) is less important than why they stay (sustainers).

Recommendations

The following ten recommendations are informed by young people's input and aim to address barriers to promote service engagement:

Accessibility Recommendations

1. Address transportation as a barrier to participation

Youth living in both rural and urban settings overwhelmingly communicated that a lack of transportation to and from opportunities is a significant, if not definitive factor in their participation in service opportunities. Youth living in rural and remote communities shared that oftentimes their areas do not offer public transportation and there is often no way to get to an opportunity unless they can get a ride with their parents. Youth living in cities shared that public transportation fares can be expensive and that transit routes are often inconvenient and long.

2. Create service opportunities that are accommodating and flexible

Youth participants communicated that their lives are complicated, especially if they are struggling to make ends meet or if they have parents struggling with issues of their own. Youth furthest from opportunity are not always able to commit to consistent participation (e.g. a youth cannot anticipate the state of their mental health on any given day). Longer-term service opportunities should have an understanding that many youth, especially those struggling with their mental health, have their own children, or those who have responsibilities at home such as caring for siblings, require accommodation and understanding to participate. Not only does a flexible commitment increase the accessibility of participation, but it also

incentivizes participation because these youth feel like their presence and contribution is valued, regardless of what extent their circumstance permits. Youth shared that accommodating and flexible service environments may include the following:

- An ability to bring friends to participate;
- Different ways to express interest in an opportunity (e.g. application forms, phone interviews etc.); and
- A culture of understanding and forgiveness (e.g. a youth is not penalized for cancelling their participation last minute).

3. Create opportunities in rural and remote communities

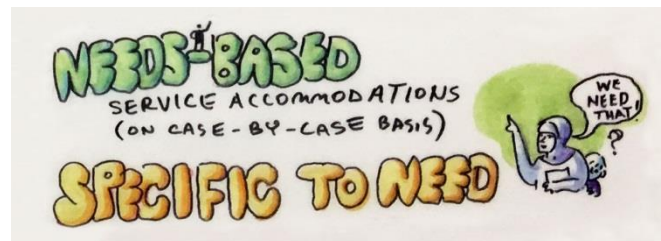
Youth living in rural and remote communities identified that not many service opportunities exist for them close to home. The CSC should support rural and remote communities to create unique service opportunities for young people, including both physical and digital participation.

“Some communities have no access to roads and have to fly out when they want to leave.”

4. Create targeted incentives

No single incentive or initiative will increase the accessibility for all youth facing barriers to participation. A blanket approach to reaching youth furthest away from opportunity will inevitably fail. For this reason, incentives need to be catered to the unique circumstances of

different youth populations. For example, while a youth living in a rural community may require transportation, a support for a young mother living in an urban setting could be childcare or a policy permitting young parents to bring their children.



5. Create equity-based incentives

Youth participants made clear that a precondition of participation in community service activities is **having basic needs met** such as food and housing. Youth experiencing poverty and homelessness made this clear and stated that they are less likely to be concerned with spending their time doing service in their community. The CSC should create equity-based incentives so that the youth who require support to participation receive it. Examples of equity-based incentives include living allowances and tuition vouchers for post-secondary education.

It is important that these incentives are iterative and emergent— some incentives will need to be piloted to determine their success. This “trial process” will increase sustainability and effectiveness in the long-term.

Awareness of Opportunities Recommendations

6. Communicate opportunities in places and spaces where youth are

Youth participants shared that in many cases, they learn about an opportunity “when it is too late”. Youth at every workshop shared that they are often unaware of opportunities available to them. Service activities need to be better communicated to youth. A key way of doing this is sharing the opportunities where youth are, whether this be in a physical place such as a school or community centre, or in online spaces that youth connect such as targeted advertising on social media.

“I pretty much only learn about volunteering opportunities from older friends and teachers at school, or from the worker at my youth centre.”

7. Market the CSC by recognizing service youth are already doing

Youth furthest away from opportunity are doing service; however, they are not always engaged in service activities in the conventional sense i.e. volunteering. For example, many youth shared that they have less time to volunteer because they work a paying job to support their family. The CSC will be relevant to these youth who are typically disengaged from service if it recognizes that they are already making important contributions, albeit at the personal or familial level.

Increasing Participation Recommendations

8. Fund communities to create locally relevant service opportunities

“I want to teach others about Truth and Reconciliation”

Communities across Canada face different challenges that service opportunities can address. The CSC should support communities through funding opportunities to address their local issues and provide locally relevant incentives to youth participation. For example, Indigenous youth participants shared that they desire to engage in culturally-relevant service activities such as initiatives to increase awareness of Truth and Reconciliation.

9. Communicate the value and benefits of service activity engagement

At least a few youth participants at every session shared they are/were unaware of the value of engaging in service activities. The CSC should actively communicate to young people that service engagement is a way to build one's resumé and social group, as well as a meaningful way to make change on things that matter. Additionally, employers should place value on the service experience that young people bring to the workplace.

*"I learned that service can help me find a job
when I'm older."*

*"I am inspired to try volunteering... I can actually
make a change."*

10. Create culturally relevant service opportunities

Indigenous, racialized and LGBTQ youth shared they their motivation to participate increases when service opportunities are culturally relevant, meaning that they resonate or are related to an aspect core to their identity. For example, Indigenous youth spoke about wanting to take action to increase awareness about Truth and Reconciliation while LGBTQ youth wanted to work to create safe spaces in schools and in communities where coming out is responded to with discrimination.

Intersections

Youth living in rural, remote and urban settings shared that transportation is a barrier to participation in service activities. While youth living in remote and rural settings often lack access to transportation altogether, youth living in urban settings shared that public transportation is often inconvenient and/or too expensive. Youth also desire opportunities that have a local impact and that are culturally relevant. In particular, youth with intersecting identities, (e.g. being Black and Indigenous, or Muslim and LGBTQ) spoke about the need for service opportunities that relate to their unique experience in the world. More often than not, where these intersecting identities exist, barriers to participation are compounded. For example, a low-income young mother living in a rural area will likely face barriers to participation despite transportation being provided by an opportunity.

Youth living in northern and remote settings shared that opportunities are often inconsistent or unsustainable because they are offered by non-northerners coming in and out of their community. This context reinforces a culture of suspicion toward opportunities being presented and demonstrates the importance of culturally relevant opportunities at the local level.

Prototype 2: Digital Platforms

The CSC workshop involved a prototyping activity to conceptualize features of a CSC digital platform. The youth participants imagined a CSC digital platform that is reliable, safe, interactive, and up-to-date. An intention of the platform should be to connect youth to both service opportunities and career development resources so that young people understand service supports their employability and vice versa.

The recommendations included in this section do not include an analysis. The digital platform prototyping activities did not prompt participants to justify their preferences.



General Recommendations

The following recommendations aim to ensure the digital platform is user-friendly and effectively communicates useful information.

Youth participants felt strongly that the digital platform should:

1. Connect young people to service, employment and volunteering opportunities that are aligned with youth's personal interests.
2. Include all information about service opportunities being communicated: time commitment, location, associated costs, prerequisite experiences etc.
3. Showcase youth's service experiences so as to provide inspiration e.g. a blog featuring youth.
4. Exist in different forms i.e., a website and phone application.
5. Be accessible and inviting by communicating information in simple language (French and English) and by adopting a design that is visually appealing (i.e. colourful). The platform should not seem like a government website.
6. Integrate social media platforms and include a "Share" function.
7. Connect youth to resources/incentives to support their participation through a "toolbox" feature including resume support and links to grant opportunities and bursaries.
8. Be a hybrid of different social media/websites such as Tinder (matching with mentors), Facebook (forum for users to share experiences in opportunities, share, 'like') Airbnb

- (vetting the quality of opportunities/mentors), and LinkedIn (to share a public resume of experience).
9. Include a search feature with the ability to filter information.
 10. Connect youth with mentors.
 11. Be able to download content to read when offline.

Content Recommendations

The following five recommendations aim to ensure the digital platform includes engaging tools and relevant resources.

Youth participants ideated specific content elements of the digital platform:

1. Every user should create a profile including information about their service/employment interests, and other types of demographic information that may be relevant e.g. LGBTQ. Each profile should:
 - a. Enable youth to track their service/employment involvement;
 - b. Be open for public viewing and include a “My References” section for employers and staff facilitating volunteer opportunities to post positive comments about the owner of the profile;
 - c. Allow users to earn “badges” for their participation that are displayed on their public profile. These badges would be recognized by employers as validations of experience and skills.
2. The main page of the digital platform should include a feed of opportunities targeted to the user’s profile information. This opportunities feed should also generate a unique calendar for the user that includes application due dates and locations of opportunities.
3. The digital platform should include a page similar to Instagram (see image to right) with various pictures that when hovered over by a mouse, open a page with information about that support/resource. Youth would ‘Like’ the photos and add the supports relevant to their participation to their ‘Toolbox’.
4. The ‘Toolbox’ feature should also include employment supports such as a resume builder and examples of cover letters and expressions of interest. The Toolbox should connect users to resources related to employment and



- services to access in-person, capacity-building workshops and webinars, transportation, food, what to wear to an interview, information about rights, definitions of common terms, mental health supports, career counselling etc.
5. The platform should include a mentorship matching feature similar to Tinder (i.e. users “swipe” to match with prospective mentors/mentees.)
 - a. When “swiping”, youth should have the ability to select on a scale from “No, Not Now, Maybe, and Yes!”;
 - b. Youth should be able to select the age range of the mentor they are seeking.

Intersections

Youth living in rural, remote and northern communities made clear that while a digital platform is important, it must not be the only way opportunities are communicated for their internet access is unreliable and inconsistent. For this reason, a digital platform should include a “download” function so content is readable offline.

A comprehensive search function is important to youth because they desire to learn about service opportunities through the Digital Platform that are related to their unique identities and personal interests. These identities and personal interests are not easily categorized and do not exist in silos. The platform should accommodate specific searches, for example, “spaces for queer black men living in Scarborough”.

Prototype 3: Mentorship Models

How do youth understand Mentorship?

Youth participants began the mentorship prototyping activity by considering: What is mentorship? What does an interaction between a mentor and mentee look like? Why is mentorship important?

Youth participants shared that mentorship is important because young people want adults in their lives that support them in reaching their goals without judgement. Although parents can play this role, most often parents have their own ideas about the path their children should take. Mentorship is especially important for youth whose parents are not or have not been a consistent or reliable person in their lives.

In a mentorship relationship, the mentor listens to the ambitions of the mentee and provides guidance and support on that basis. Youth participants expressed that they want these types of mentors because they do not always have people in their lives who know how to navigate a path to reach their goals and aspirations.

Youth made clear that they want different types of mentorship at different stages of their life. For example, some youth seek mentorship within a structured timeline e.g. mentorship throughout applications to post-

secondary, while others desire mentorship that is based in relationships and ongoing guidance not necessarily related to a specific area. Connected to this, youth also want mentors of different ages, depending on the guidance they are seeking.

The recommendations included in this section do not include an analysis. The mentorship prototyping activities did not prompt participants to justify their preferences.

Mentorship Recommendations

The following recommendations will support the CSC to create a mentorship program that addresses the various forms of guidance and support Canadian youth seek.

Youth Definitions of Mentorship

Youth participants defined three main characteristics of mentorship:

1. Mentorship is an interaction characterized by both friendship and learning in an effort to build capacity.
2. Mentorship opportunities are meaningful when they are relevant to the needs and interests of both the mentee and mentor; there is a partnership aspect to mentorship.
3. Mentors are relatable. Mentorship is impactful when mentors share similar backgrounds and life experiences as their mentee.

Youth participants also defined key qualities of a good mentor:

1. A good mentor has a positive outlook on youth, non-judgemental.
2. A good mentor builds confidence in their mentee.
3. A good mentor works to earn the trust of their mentee and does not rush this process.
4. A good mentor is reliable.
5. A good mentor listens well and supports the mentee to determine and reach their goals.
6. A good mentor is honest about their experience and shares both their past challenges and successes.
7. A good mentor has a relatability factor- something significant about the mentor's identity is shared in common with the mentee (e.g. Indigenous young people indicated that their mentors must be culturally-relevant).

CSC Mentorship Program Recommendations

The following recommendations suggest features to include in the CSC mentorship program.

1. Integrate the mentorship program into the CSC digital platform.
2. Youth felt the process of matching a mentor to a mentee should include the following:
 - Both youth and mentor complete a *diagnostic survey* with **information about their identity, experiences, type of mentorship they are seeking** (i.e. short term, long term, specific task/process). This survey will also include whether the youth is seeking an **online mentorship or in-person**, and a **filter for certain experiences** an ideal mentor would have (e.g., went to college, is a lawyer, works in agriculture etc.);
 - Youth should be able to **indicate an age range of their desired mentor** (e.g. 29-35, Elder);
3. The digital platform should have a Tinder-like feature by which youth “swipe” through potential mentors and select whether they are a “No, Not Now, Maybe, and Yes!”.
4. Once mentees are matched with a mentor, they should both attend a local “**Meet Up**” **event** to get to know each other in a safe and informal space. These Meet Up events should take place at spaces youth already gather, such as schools, community centres, libraries, and coffee shops. These Meet Ups will provide a safe space for mentees to meet their mentor for the first time and engage in facilitated activities to get to know one another.
5. Include and effectively communicate **a process by which mentees can report inappropriate behaviour by a mentor** with confidence that their allegations will be taken seriously and addressed with action.
6. Mentors should be vetted by the CSC and require a background check prior to creating a user profile on the digital platform.



Intersections

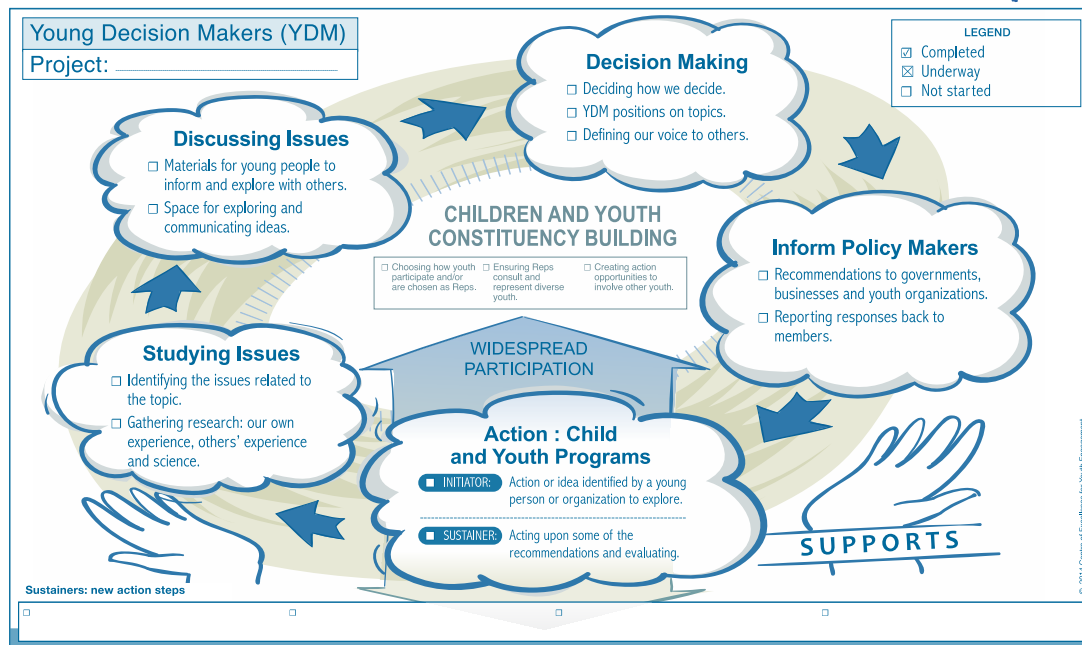
Youth, especially LGBTQ, racialized, Indigenous and youth with diverse abilities want to be connected to mentors that reflect themselves. Youth not only want mentors that look like themselves (e.g. are racialized) but also have had similar experiences (e.g. living in foster care).

Roadmap for Ongoing Youth Engagement

“I learned that the ideas we have about volunteering will go somewhere and actually make a difference.”

Youth participants discussed a number of formal and informal mechanisms for sustained youth engagement at ESDC. They felt that it was important that both the CSC embedded on-going mechanisms for youth voice in decision-making. The discussions that took place through the 20 #CanadaWeWant CSC summits were grounded in the Students Commission of Canada’s Four Pillars: Respect, Listen, Understand and Communicate™, as well as the Young Decision Makers Model (YDM). The YDM could be utilized in future youth engagement opportunities to gather input into as the CSC launches platforms.

The Young Decision Makers Project Model



It is important that ESDC create opportunities for on-going dialogue with youth. This includes:

- Tracking outcomes of the CSC and not just tracking numbers. Outcomes are the changes that occur as a result of the intervention and/or program. ESDC should incorporate a shared learning platform for its participating organizations so that the changes that are occurring with young people are tracked and the story of these initiatives is told. These success stories and improvements can be organized and shared through the digital platform so that youth, mentors and participating organizations can harvest what's worked and what hasn't worked. For an example of a shared learning platform, that is currently used with 300 participating organizations across Canada, please go to www.sharingthestories.ca and www.sharingthestories.ca/stepup
- ESDC should set-up an on-going Youth Action Committee that acts as an on-going advisory to the Ministry. The YAC should be grounded in constituency and service: youth should represent the diversity of Canada and should be expected to engage with youth in their communities to ensure that more than just their individual voice is heard. The Action component could include delivering local workshops or hosting local consultations.
- ESDC should act as a convenor/backbone support for youth, mentors and adult allies by hosting regional summits to address specific issues as they relate to service and volunteerism. ESDC should also then convene an annual national summit that allows the sector to report and exchange knowledge on the impact of the CSC.

Overall Conclusion

Young people from all over Canada came together to provide feedback to the federal government about the Canada Service Corps. During these events, diverse youth were actively engaged in creating concrete recommendations to make Canada a better place for young people.

The major findings from the Canada Service Corps sessions suggest that young people are quite interested in serving their community. Though young people had differing definitions of what service and volunteering meant, many core themes occurred across each session, especially in terms of how to get young people more involved in service. The following were key themes that youth reflected on during the session:

- Incentives and opportunities should be designed on a needs-based basis, so that those further from opportunity may have as much chance to serve their community as other youth;
- Transportation was a major barrier to participating in service, especially for youth in rural or remote areas;
- How you get the young people to opportunities (initiator) is less important than why they stay (sustainer);

- A digital platform for service opportunities should also include employment opportunities, youth-rights information, and provide skill development; and
- A mentorship program should include the appropriate mentor – one that is engaged, open, and trustworthy.

Annex

The following section provides an analysis of the visuals included in this report. These visuals were created by Todd Ward, the Artistic Director of the Students Commission of Canada, and reflect the key ideas youth participants shared in their input to the Canada Service Corps.

Youth Service Journey – 3 Prototypes

Full Visual of Three Prototypes



Fig. 1

Analysis

Workshop participants generated three prototypes – all of which are illustrated the large mural shown above. Each of the three prototypes are expanded below for easier viewing in the following sections.

Prototype 1: Barriers/Incentives to Service and Volunteerism

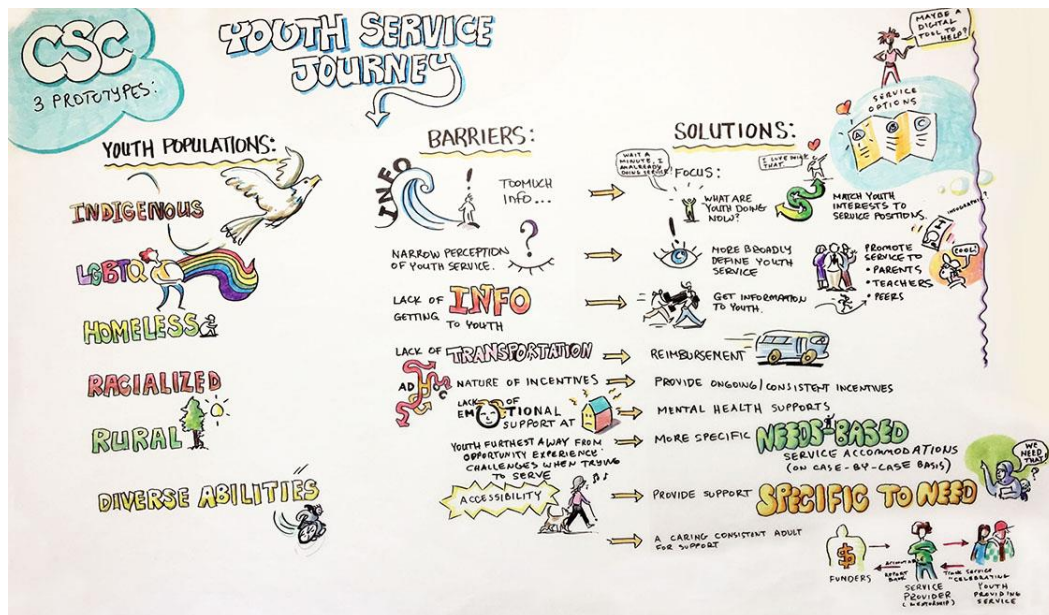


Fig. 2

Analysis

Youth furthest away from opportunity experience multiple and intersecting barriers to engage in service and volunteering activities. The visual above depicts the 'Youth Service Journey' that was identified by young people furthest away from opportunity. This journey begins with the different populations of young people: Indigenous, LGBTQ+, youth with insecure housing, racialized youth, youth living in remote and rural communities and young people with diverse abilities. These populations of young people face the greatest barriers to engaging in service and volunteerism.

The visual outlines the barriers youth face most often during their 'Youth Service Journey'. These barriers and their respective solutions are outlined below:

- Barrier:** Young people's service opportunism is hindered by information overflow. Often, youth are given unfocused copious amounts of information.

Solution: If the information surrounding service opportunities for youth is narrowed and focused when presented, it would help youth process the presented information and find what opportunities match their interests. A hub of information surrounding youth service opportunities would help youth in this journey, such as a digital database.
- Barrier:** Youth participants identified that many adults, service providers, etc. have a narrow perception of what constitutes service, therefore undermining the (often unrecognized) valuable service youth may already be doing. This lack of recognition discourages future service participation.

- Solution:** A broader understanding of service should be adopted. Youth furthest from opportunity are already committing themselves to service in unique and valuable ways. Once a less exclusive definition of service is established, (i.e. service doesn't require traditional leadership) young people will feel empowered to continue their service in different formats.
3. **Barrier:** There is a lack of information getting to youth, particularly those furthest from opportunity.
- Solution:** The CSC needs to find innovative ways to deliver and present information regarding service to youth. A simple way to convey information to young people is to present it to the people in their social circles: parents, peers, teachers etc.
4. **Barrier:** Youth participants overwhelmingly identified transportation, or lack thereof, as a barrier to committing themselves to service and volunteering.
- Solution:** Reimbursement programs for the cost of transportation when traveling to service and volunteer activities should be established to help young people overcome the discouraging cost of transportation.
5. **Barrier:** Incentives can be perceived as changing the culture of service to one that is no longer characterized by selflessness. Incentives to assist participation are not consistent.
- Solution:** It must be understood that incentives don't take away from the service that young people provide and is proven to be an effective format to encourage youth service. When incentives are presented to youth in service as *initiators* they should remain consistent and ongoing to act as *sustainers*.
6. **Barrier:** Many youth do not receive much support at home and face significant mental health challenges.
- Solution:** Supports must be accessible and effectively communicated so that youth are aware of them and therefore able to access the resources and services they need.

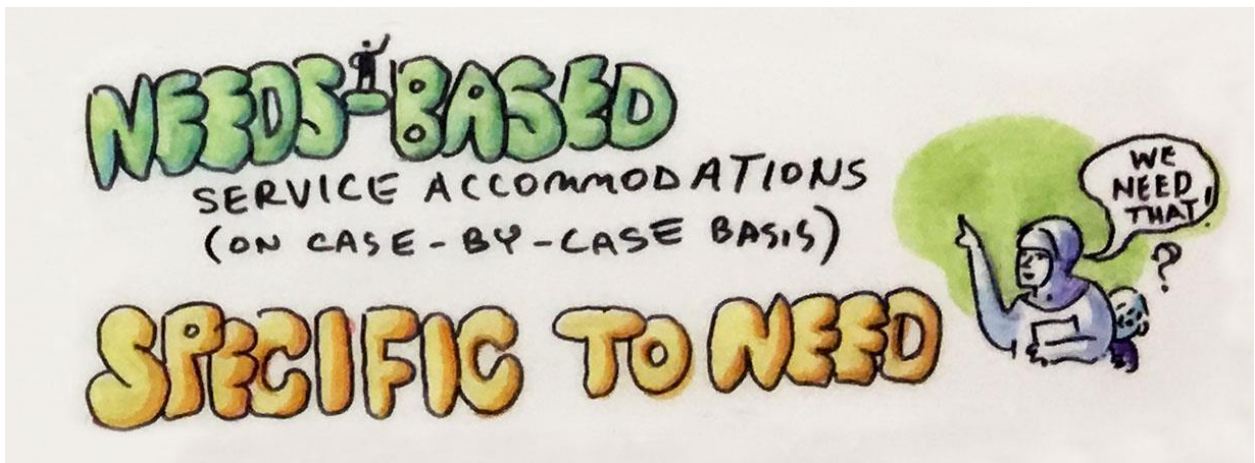


Fig. 3

Analysis

Youth furthest from opportunity experience a problematic number of barriers to participating in service activities. Youth participants recognized that service opportunities would be more accessible if participation expectations were flexible and accommodating to their **specific needs**. Youth in Canada have diverse needs and accessibility requirements. In order to have fully participate in service, youth facing barriers require needs-based accommodations that are determined on a **case-by-case basis**.

Prototype 2: Digital Platform



Fig. 4

The second prototype conceptualized features of a CSC digital platform. Youth participants imagined a CSC digital platform that is reliable, safe, interactive, and up-to-date.

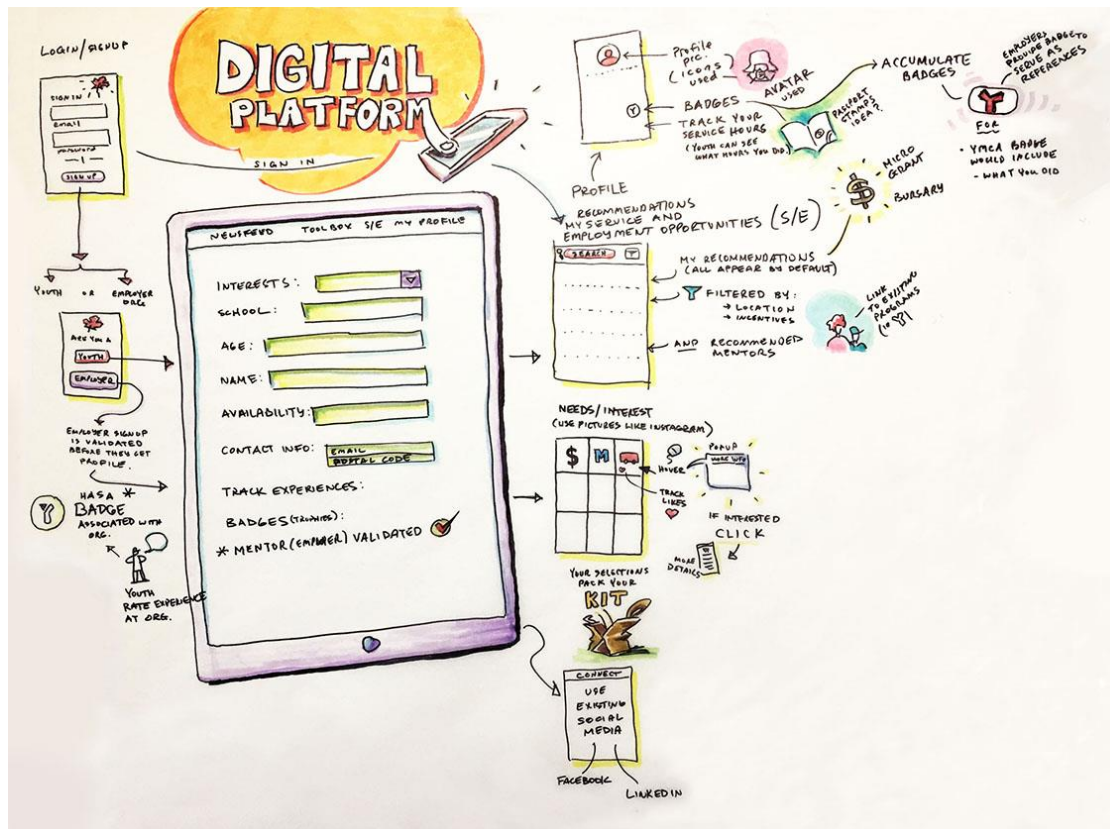


Fig. 5

Analysis

The visual above illustrates features and content youth participants recommended to be included in the digital platform. A detailed description of these recommendations can be found pages 15-17 of this report.

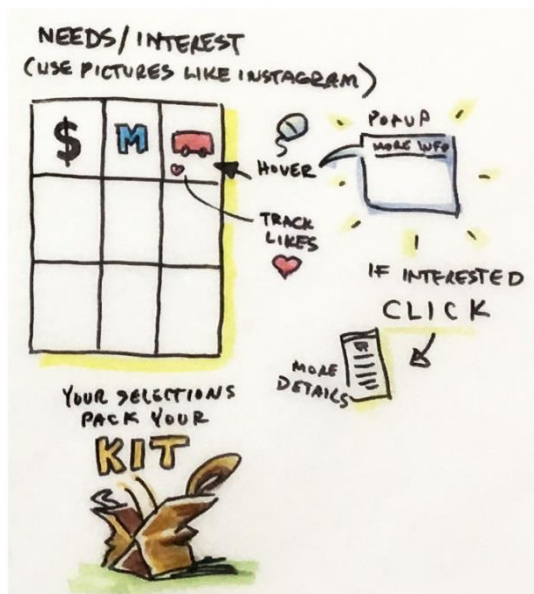


Fig. 6

Analysis

The visual shows examples of what youth participants identified as important to a successful digital platform: bright colors, a lot of visual cues, simple yet attractive etc. The consensus among youth was that rather than simply an informative website, the platform should be closely resemble a social media platform. As such, it should include tools for users to share their service accomplishments (e.g. earning badges for participation). User's profiles should be public and include the user's interests, age, name, avatar or profile picture. For further details see Digital Platform Content Recommendation 3.

Prototype 3: Mentorship Models



Fig. 7

The third prototyping activity invited youth to define mentorship and conceptualize features of a CSC mentorship program.

Analysis

The visual above depicts what features of mentorship result in positive experience. Youth defined mentorship as a mutually beneficial relationship between the mentor and mentee. The youth participants shared that the CSC mentorship program will be successful if it has mentors that have the capacity to support and meet the diverse mentorship needs of Canadian youth.

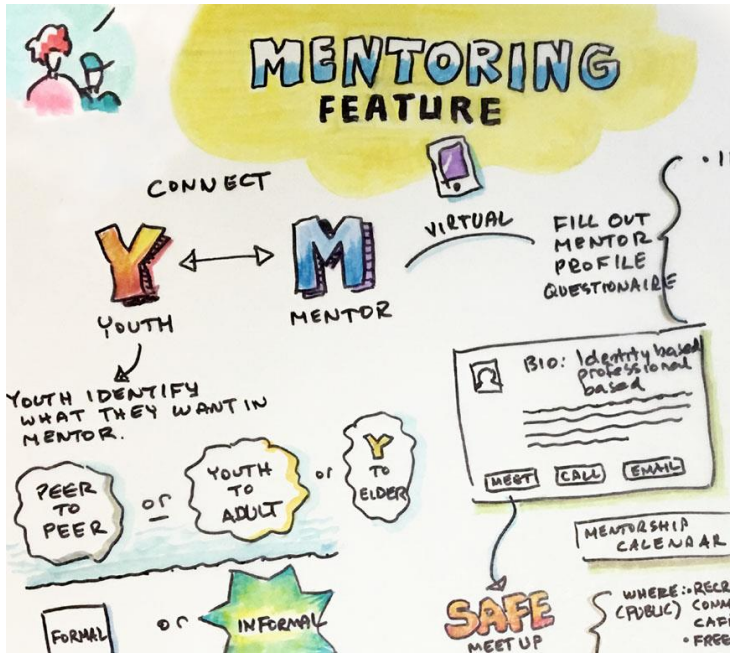


Fig. 8

Analysis

The visual above illustrates the process by which youth conceptualized being matched with a mentor through the CSC mentorship program. Youth participants shared that they want a mentorship program that meets their unique needs and desired forms of support (i.e. peer-to-peer mentorship, youth-adult mentorship). For further details see CSC Mentorship Program Recommendations 2-3.



The Students
Commission
Centre of Excellence for
Youth Engagement



YOUTH SERVICE AND VOLUNTEERISM

FEBRUARY 2018

Being engaged in one's community, especially through volunteering opportunities, is a valuable experience all young people should have. Not all young people have the opportunity to volunteer, however, and not all volunteer opportunities are meaningful. The #CanadaWeWant gives young people the opportunity to explore and identify their interests through volunteering opportunities. The #CanadaWeWant is a place where young people volunteer from a young age. These experiences will reinforce young people's understanding that their voice matters and that they can positively impact change in their



SUMMARY

Research shows that youth engagement has positive outcomes for young people's health, skills development and personal confidence. This report calls for the youth policy to support strategies that increase youth engagement in communities across Canada through volunteering.

Community Highlighting the tangible impact youth can have during volunteering allows them to have ownership over their volunteering and know that they are contributing to strengthening and supporting their community.

Relatedness Youth look for opportunities that create connections with others and help build relationships. They enjoy meeting new

people and participating in volunteer activities with their friends. Volunteering can provide opportunities for meaningful relationship development and new connections.

Meaning and Impact Youth are full of energy and are aware of social issues. They look for meaningful opportunities to volunteer where they have an impact on their community and are contributing to social issues that resonate with them. Volunteering can empower youth and communities to fulfill their potential and contribute to social change.

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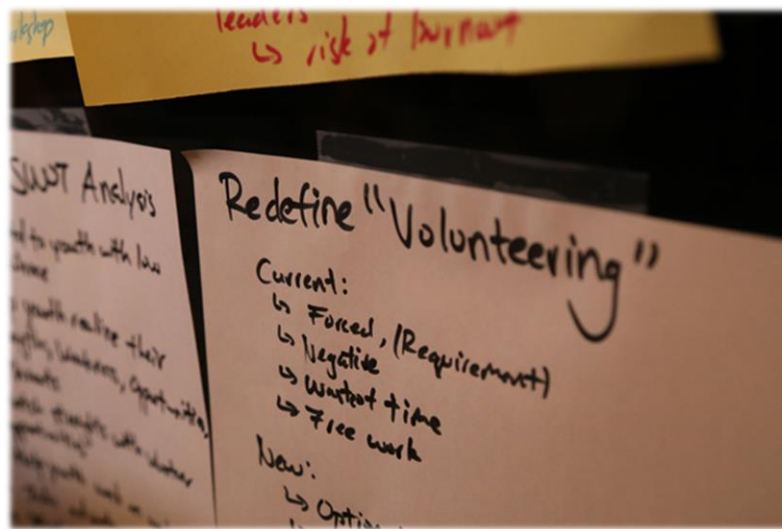
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Acknowledgments

Thank you first to the courageous young people who traveled from coast to coast to coast to build the #CanadaWeWant so we can have the #CanadaWeNeed.

With representatives from First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities from across the country, we humbly gathered on the traditional territories of the Haudenosaunee, the Ojibway/Chippewas, the Anishinabek, and currently the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation. We were also surrounded by Indigenous communities: to the North were the Chippewas of Georgina Island; to the East are the Mississaugas of Scugog Island; and to the West are the Chippewas of Kettle and Stoney Point. Through Indigenous-led ceremony, acknowledgement and respect, we recognized the enduring presence of Indigenous Peoples on this land, and were very grateful to have the opportunity to use it as a meeting place, and a space for knowledge sharing.

Thank you to the Canada Service Corps for supporting the participation of youth participants from across the country and for asking us to provide our voice on this topic. Thank you to YMCA Cedar Glen, The Students Commission of Canada, Sharing the Stories Research and Evaluation Platform, Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement, RBC Foundation, UNICEF Canada, the Government of Canada and the many other funders of the #CanadaWeWant Conference 2018, and all of the organizers, elders, adult allies, facilitators, and most of all the wonderful youth participants. Thank you to The Students Commission Conference Planning Committee for their hard work. Thank you to the federal government representatives and policymakers that attended the Conference and will continue to support the development of A Youth Policy for Canada.



Executive Summary

Research shows that youth engagement has positive outcomes for young people's health, skills development and personal confidence. This report calls for the youth policy to support strategies that increase youth engagement in communities across Canada through volunteering. Our report is grouped into three categories related to youth service volunteerism: Community, Connectedness, and Meaning and Impact.

Community

Volunteering opportunities should emphasize the impact youth have on their communities through their participation. This allows young people to connect to their community by knowing that their contributions are strengthening and supporting it. Through volunteerism, youth can increase their understanding of the issues facing their communities. They can build the skills needed to make the positive changes that they want to see. Communities need to realize that supporting youth to volunteer from a young age can have lasting impacts on both communities and the individuals volunteering. Communities need to be adequately resourced so that young people can be successful in their volunteer opportunities. This resourcing includes training, micro-grants and dedicated funding to support local volunteer programs.

Relatedness

Volunteering helps young people feel more connected: to themselves, to their communities, and to the people they are volunteering with. Volunteer opportunities should reinforce connection through relationship development. Volunteering opportunities often provide young people with mentors, but also with meaningful friendships.

Young people at this Conference shared that giving back to one's community is an integral part of many Indigenous cultures; every living thing is understood to be intrinsically connected. Therefore, volunteer opportunities are an opportunity to walk the path of truth and reconciliation: non-Indigenous youth can about Indigenous worldviews through service and volunteerism.

Young people feel connected when they share their story. We recommend that the youth policy support a digital platform for youth in Canada to share their volunteering experiences. This platform could highlight "Youth Champions" to influence and inspire their peers. Peer to peer empowerment will help foster a culture in which young people are involved in their communities, especially through volunteering activities.

Volunteering also often connects young people with adults that mentor and support their interests. The #CanadaWeWant is a place where adults support youth service and volunteering opportunities by listening, providing constructive feedback, and valuing young people's contribution without making comparisons to adult counterparts.

Meaning and Impact

Youth are full of energy and are aware of social issues. Young people desire meaningful opportunities to volunteer where they have an impact so that they can address the social issues that matter to them. This process of contributing to something that matters greatly to young

people is often transformative and empowering. In order for the volunteer opportunities to be meaningful, young people need to be able to identify the positive things they are contributing to. Wherever possible, the impact of youths' contribution should be communicated.

Meaningful volunteer opportunities also allow young people to use and develop leadership skills, as this increases both engagement and motivation to participate. There should be formalized partnerships between school boards and community organizations to accelerate impact on social issues that need the most attention. School curricula, beginning at the elementary level, should evolve to allow youth to access volunteering opportunities that support youth to explore and develop passions. Volunteering from a young age also instills the value of engaging in one's community and by extension, instills an understanding that one's voice matters and can have impact. These values will extend into secondary school, and move the motivation behind volunteering beyond achieving the mandatory hours required to graduate.

Our Recommendations

Through various discussions and activities at the #CanadaWeWant Conference, we have developed nine recommendations to increase youth engagement in service and volunteerism across Canada:

- 1) Create a Digital Volunteer Portfolio Platform
- 2) Develop and Deliver Workshop Programs
- 3) Host National Youth Forums (NYF)
- 4) Create Mentor to Mentee Community Meet Up Programs
- 5) Create an Human Resources Consultant
- 6) Volunteer Opportunities should be accessible to diverse youth
- 7) Community Service Integrated Education in Elementary Education
- 8) Create a Community Champions Program
- 9) Redefine Volunteering



"I worked with an organization that deals with food security and helping people get back to their roots and food sustainability was really impactful."

"It is important to show youth the positive impact that they can have on their community. Volunteering helped shape my social identity."



"Any service experience can lead to a career."

If the site [digital platform] can grow with you, that would be cool."

#CANADA WE WANT

The change we want to see:

- Meaningful volunteer opportunities are accessible to all youth
- A Canada in which long-term community engagement and volunteering exist for youth in their communities
- Volunteer opportunities that emphasize the impact/outcomes participation supports- this allows youth to increase their sense of sociopolitical control
- Ensure anti-racism and Indigenous representation are present in volunteer opportunities
- Youth in Canada are engaged in their communities

The way we want to get there (Activity 1):

Online Volunteer Portfolio Platform

Activity 2:

Workshop Programs

Activity 3:

National Youth Forums (NYF)

Activity 4:

Mentor to Mentee Community Meet I In Program

Activity 5:

HR Consultant/Counselling Program

Activity 6:

Providing Extra Supports for Those Who Need Them

What we need to get there (Resources):

- Funding from the government to support the creation of volunteer opportunities in communities
- An Online Volunteer Portfolio Platform
- Adults that work *with* youth and act as mentors
- Collaboration between local actors to implement the youth policy

Activity 7:

Community Service Integrated Education in Elementary

Activity 8:

Community Champions Program

Activity 9:

Redefining 'Volunteering'

The way we want to get there (Resources):

- Collaboration between all levels of government
- Local governments that support service providers/organizations to create volunteer opportunities that address social issues
- Communities create opportunities based on youths' interests

What are the root causes of the problems behind Service and Volunteerism among youth?

Understanding

Youth do not always understand the value in volunteering and the impact it has on our communities.

Portrayal of Volunteerism

Youth often understand volunteering as merely a mandatory activity to graduate high school.

Motivation/Engagement/Connection

Volunteer activities are not always as meaningful as they could be, so engagement less sustained.

Opportunities lack accessibility

Volunteer opportunities are not always accessible to diverse young people.

Our Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Create a Digital Youth Service and Volunteerism Portfolio Platform

Create an online volunteering portal that would increase access and awareness of opportunities to volunteer, be mentored and attain skills and certifications. This portal would communicate to young people the connection between volunteering and gaining experience that will benefit them in finding employment and determining their educational path. The portal should include:

- A section about bursaries and awards seeking applicants
- A section that links youth with mentors (e.g. “connect with a professional and discuss their career”)
- A section that explains the skills, degrees and certifications required to work in certain careers (e.g. A lawyer must have Bachelor’s Degree, write the LSAT and go to law school, then write the Bar Exam.)
- Potential for further development of portal to include job search engine and job matching based on skills/interests/experiences
- Opportunities for young people to participate in informative webinars about volunteering and career development
- A platform for young people to document their experiences and skills, which could be exported into a resume

Furthermore, the portal should:

- Be advertised in spaces young people gather (e.g. Community Centres, Schools, Libraries). There should be specific outreach about the portal targeted at rural and newcomer communities.

Recommendation 2: Workshop Programs

Communities should deliver workshops that help organizations understand the types of opportunities and support young people need in volunteering/engaging with community organization. These workshops should include dialogue between young people and should occur annually. These workshops will help ensure volunteer opportunities for young people are meaningful.

Recommendation 3: Host National Youth Forums (NYF)

National Youth Forums provide diverse young people the opportunity to connect and learn from one another. We imagine a National Youth Forum program resembling something like the following:

- Two age sections, Junior Forums (12-18 years of age) and Senior Forums (19-29 years old)

- Forums should highlight the work young people are doing in their communities, and recognize achievements with awards
- The Junior National Youth Forums could be led and organized by the Senior NYF participants and would focus on skill building and project development (e.g. starting a community garden, finding adults to support your project, identifying decision-makers in your community etc.)
- The Senior National Youth Forums could be organized by previous youth leaders and would focus on advanced skill building (e.g. how to evaluate your project)
- Incentivize attendance of all types of young people. For example, to encourage youth that would not necessarily come on their own, allow for half off fees when attending with a friend.

Recommendation 4: Create a Mentor to Mentee Community Meet Up Program

Create local programs that match young people with mentors. “Meet ups” between mentors and mentees could be virtual or in person. This program should be delivered through schools, and advertised in libraries, recreational centres (or other places where youth congregate).

Recommendation 5: Human Resources Consultants

Human Resource consultants should be available to support local organizations with supporting young people in volunteer opportunities. Young people should be able to access this human resources consultant as well. This would reduce the risk of burnout and improve the sustainability of volunteer opportunities.

Recommendation 6: Volunteer Opportunities should be accessible for diverse youth

Some young people require more support than others to volunteer. The #CanadaWeWant is one in which all young people have the opportunity to engage in their communities through volunteering. Extra supports should be available for young people facing barriers to participation such as:

- Incentives (food, transportation support)
- Childcare services for those that have adult responsibilities at home (i.e. young parents, youth that care for siblings)
- Recognitions such as certificates

Recommendation 7: Community Service should be integrated into Elementary Education

Volunteer opportunities should be integrated into curriculum for young people beginning in Grade 6. This would instill the value of volunteering in young people. These opportunities should take place during school hours and should cater to the interests of the students.

Recommendation 8: Create a Community Champions Program

Young people's contributions should be recognized at the community level. A Community Champions program should be created to highlight the work young people are doing in their communities; these champions could help support the Online Portal. These champions will do outreach with organizations to find volunteers, and the champions should be from diverse communities. The idea behind the Community Champions program is that youth will inspire and connect with their peers about community engagement. These Champions could also support the workshop programs noted above in Recommendation 2.

Recommendation 9: Redefine Volunteering

There is a sense among many young people that volunteering is merely a mandatory activity required to graduate high school. The #CanadaWeWant is one in which young people value volunteering because of its connection to engaging and making change in one's community. In the #CanadaWeWant, volunteer hours wouldn't be mandatory because young people would be motivated to volunteer on their own accord. This can only take place if volunteer opportunities also change to be accessible for diverse young people, especially young people facing barriers to participation. In this, volunteering would be the vehicle through which young people explore and identify their interests and passions.

Conclusion

Young people have energy and an awareness of social issues that are fundamental to the future of volunteerism in Canada. The #CanadaWeWant is one in which young people are able to volunteer in their community, regardless of where they live, of who they are. Volunteerism should provide young people with the opportunity to explore and identify their passions and interests. Meaningful volunteer experiences should make it clear to young people the impact they are having on their community. In the #CanadaWeWant, volunteerism provides a vehicle for young people's voices to be amplified so that they can take action on the issues and ideas that matter to them.