

URBAN YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION SERVICE

30-Month Evaluation
April 2020 - September 2022

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About UYES!

- The Urban Youth Employment and Education Service (UYES!) is a comprehensive community response to meeting the needs of a high number of at-risk youth in Saint John who are not in employment, education, or training programs¹. Under the leadership of the Saint John Human Development Council, UYES! is delivered by a partnership of well-respected agencies, each of which contributes its expertise to programs and services that assist and empower youth building pathways to employment.

Project purpose

- At-risk youth often struggle with poverty, poor housing, food insecurity, family breakdown, mental health issues, and addiction. Any one – and certainly all – of these factors can act as a barrier to school attendance, training, employment, and most importantly, to a young person's hope for a better future. Comprehensive supports from case managers, integrated coaching, on-site mental health supports, and rapid-response financial interventions and goal-based financial incentives – all these strategies have a role to play in removing such barriers.
In Saint John, where 32% of children live in poverty², UYES! is a vital part of a community-wide effort to break the generational cycle of poverty and even more importantly, to build a skilled and confident workforce for the future. The majority of participants are aged 16 to 20, a key transitional phase for young people.



¹ Saint John Human Development Council, Community Reflections, Issue 13 (2019), p.1. In Saint John, 1,950 young people (i.e., persons aged 15-29) are not in employment, education, or training (NEET): 360 aged 15-19 years (10% of the total population of youth), 745 aged 20-24 (17.5%), and 845 aged 25-29 (19.7%). These percentages exceed both provincial and national averages in all three age categories.

² Statistics Canada, T1 Family File, 2020



Brad completed high school and has been working in scaffolding for over six months. He now lives with his partner and their new baby, and receives a rent subsidy.



Progress

- UYES! is entering the final year of a four-year project funded by the Government of Canada under the Youth Employment and Skills Strategy. Through Phase 1 and now Phase 2, UYES! has successfully empowered young adults aged 15 to 30 to affirm and achieve their goals to:
 - continue their education and secure a high school diploma.
 - enter post-secondary education and training programs with secure funding and support.
 - gain employment experience and maintain a decent job that provides economic stability.
 - participate in community projects that build confidence, skills, purpose, and relationships.
 - stabilize their lives by addressing barriers to health, housing barriers and basic needs.

About this report

This evaluation provides a snapshot of UYES!, its impact, key learnings, conclusions, and recommendations for next steps. Phase 2 of UYES! runs from April 2020 to March 2024. For the purposes of this report we are reporting on data from April 20th, 2020 to September 30th, 2022. The intention of UYES! partners is to secure continued federal funding, integral to meeting the needs of at-risk youth in Saint John.



Learn more about UYES!

If you would like to learn more about UYES!, the following reports and resources provide additional information about the program model, its features, and its impacts on youth:

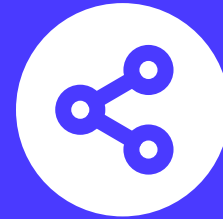
- UYES! Phase 1 evaluation report (March 2020) and Phase 2 mid-point evaluation (March 2022).
- Case studies that document the journey of ten participants over an 18-month period.
- A UYES! video, “Moving Youth Forward,” showcasing the initiative from the perspective of youth, program staff, and community partners.
- A glossary of relevant terms and acronyms.

Learn more about UYES! <https://sjhdc.ca/uyes/>

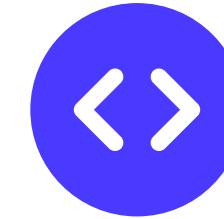
Impact



The UYES! initiative has brought together the resources and expertise of the Saint John Learning Exchange, the Teen Resource Centre (TRC), and the Human Development Council to empower youth to move towards sustainable employment. Together, the three agencies marshal 100 years of experience in human services. This multi-agency collaborative has leveraged significant assistance from other community and government partners, including policy changes in order to remove barriers to the progress of youth.



The federal government has invested \$2,178,133 with the goal of serving 150 youth. UYES! served 311 youth in its first 29 months, leading to current and future cost-savings for governments and communities. Lower educational attainment in a society greatly contributes to the persistence of generational poverty³. For example, every time a student graduates from high school in Ontario, the provincial government is estimated to save close to \$3,000 per year in social assistance, healthcare, and criminal justice spending⁴. Furthermore, compared with their less-educated counterparts, highly-educated young Canadians are more likely to hold full-time permanent paid positions, and receive higher wages⁵.



The Phase 1 and Phase 2 evaluations for UYES! confirm that this multi-service initiative is exceeding the participation, education and employment deliverables established at its outset. Investment in UYES! is achieving a solid impact for youth and the community.

³ M.B. Coelli, D.A. Green, and W.P. Warburton, W.P., “Breaking the cycle? The effects of education on welfare receipt among children of welfare recipients,” *Journal of Public Economics*, 91 (2007):1369-1398.

⁴ A. McArthur-Gupta, “The Economic Case for Investing in Education” (Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada, 2019).

⁵ René Morissette, “Portrait of Youth in Canada: Data Report – Chapter 2: Youth Employment in Canada” (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, July 26, 2021).

” The chance, the opportunity to build a life after crisis..... Sixteen youth received housing case management and were able to reconnect to educational programs including three who entered NBCC.

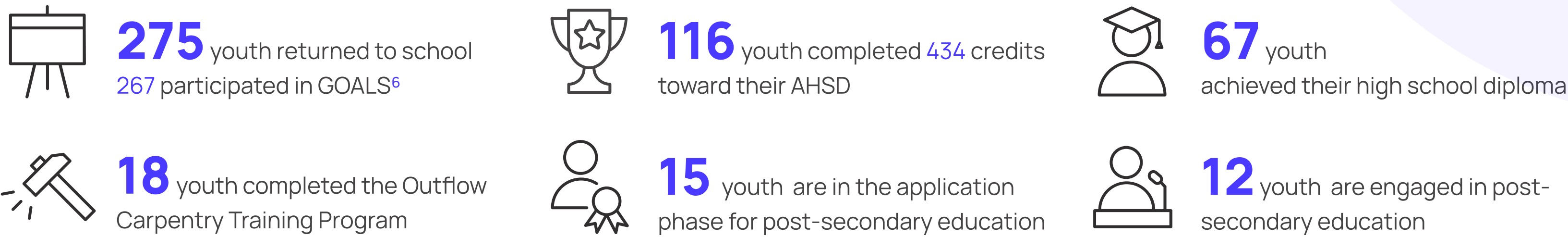
The design works!

- Youth are now more employable as a result of UYES! Many youth start UYES! disenfranchised, with limited confidence or belief in their abilities and their future. Participants describe the importance of learning communication and team work skills. More importantly, they express the view that an adult high school diploma is essential to future employment opportunities. This outlook is reflected in their behaviour: 73% of participants made progress towards high school completion.

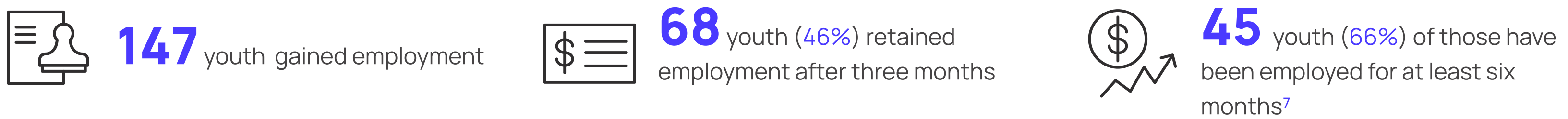
As of September 30, 2022, 311 youth had participated in UYES!; by January 2023, an additional 15 youth had started and approximately 30 more are on the waiting list. The following highlights the progress made by youth in their education and employment goals over the 30-month period (ending September 30):



Education



Employment



- Many youth successfully completed short-term training programs by means of which they can continue to build their skills: Food Safety Certification, CPR, Occupational Health and Safety (including Workplace Hazardous Materials), and Graduated Licence Program. Twenty-nine youth participated in Entrepreneurial and Life Skills training.
- Pathways to sustainable employment are uneven and complex; the journey takes time. Youth start and stop. Some participants require short-term supports while others may require longer-term supports. Follow-up is key as many participants are still building their self-confidence and their understanding of what the journey requires.

⁶ Growing Occupational, Academic and Life Skills
⁷ Youth receives incentives upon confirmation of employment, then again at the three- and six-month follow-ups. There may be more youth who are employed, but did not participate in the follow-ups.



Mentorship and Supports

UYES! staff worked with youth to identify their short- and long-term employment, education, and personal goals. Through case management, coaching, and financial interventions, staff help youth become more confident, committed, and successful. Depending on individual needs, they draw upon a range of wraparound supports to help youth navigate barriers and challenging situations. Such supports may take the following forms: how to budget; developing independent living skills; how to acquire identification documents; changing nutritional or sleeping habits; accessing affordable housing; and managing relationships. Key to all is the consistent provision of encouragement. Wraparound supports enable youth to enter programming and stick with it, so they are better positioned to achieve the changes they so desire.



244 received coaching to identify and achieve employment, education and personal goals



66 received a total of \$78,038 in rapid-response financial interventions such as food vouchers or a damage deposit



152 received a total of \$180,325.54 in goal-based financial incentives



50 received on-site mental health supports from TRC mental health outreach coordinator



77 received intensive case management support to navigate barriers to their participation



44 received housing-specific case management supports

Partnerships






- Community partnerships are essential to the success of UYES!. Partnerships leverage additional financial resources, specific support services, and policy changes that contribute to the progress and success of youth. The integrated delivery of low-barrier, high-support programs by community partners enables youth to achieve better outcomes in gaining employment and/or pursuing further education. Funding for UYES! leverages a network of community and government resources to address gaps in services, supports, and opportunities for youth.




” If we are to be innovative about anything in the future it must be about how we work together.

Al Etmanski, author and social innovator

The following provides a brief snapshot of key partners and their role in supporting youth in UYES!:

-  Working with the Anglophone South School District has enabled the accreditation of UYES! programs for youth as old as 25 so they can achieve their Adult High School Diploma.
-  The on-site mental health outreach worker at the TRC is proving to be a very beneficial, inviting, and accessible resource who reduces reliance on outside supports, already taxed by the demand. The expertise of the outreach coordinator enables a more interdisciplinary approach to discerning the best ways for case managers and other staff to support youth.
-  Outflow's Carpentry Training Program has connected many youth to the construction industry, building both knowledge and hands-on experience.
-  The Learning Exchange's relationships with employers serves as a bridge between the needs of employers and the skills of youth, to enhance preparation for the world of work.
-  TD Bank agreed to ensure that youth waiting to receive identification documents (e.g., a birth certificate) could open an account if they supplied a letter from a UYES! partner.



-  The Housing First pilot project with Housing Alternatives, TRC, and Learning Exchange (with research support from University of New Brunswick–Saint John) provides affordable and safe housing options for youth, and includes wraparound supports. It has led to the hiring of a Youth Housing Outreach Coordinator working with TRC and funded by the provincial department of Social Development.

Considerations for the future

— Over the last two phases of UYES!, changes have been made in its delivery, program content, and wraparound supports. The following changes are suggested for the next iteration of UYES!:



Strengthen programming in support of youth's transition to the workforce. Finding and maintaining a job can be challenging for many workers, but especially for those with limited work experience and lower levels of education. A youth employment specialist is recommended to provide the more intense support required by youth, including follow-up and liaison between youth and employers.



Pilot additional case management tools. They will enable case managers to track the timelines and intensity of youth support and explore how systems are contributing to the barriers faced by youth.



Resource a case management coordinator: Case managers require a coordinator's assistance in maintaining consistent data tracking, communication, scheduling, and standardizing of case plans. The collected data will also bring to light patterns that can inform future programming and advocacy.

Conclusions



As long as you are slowly getting out of your family’s pattern, going to school or work, you are building your life one step at a time. This is the greatest opportunity I have ever had.

UYES! Participant

01

— UYES! is a solution that works. Through governmental support, interagency collaboration, and a flexible, client-centric approach, UYES! helps hundreds of youth 15-30 years of age find the stability and support needed to elevate their lives through education, employment, and engagement. UYES! has proven itself to be an essential partner in breaking the cycle of at-risk youth remaining in or falling into generational poverty.

02

— UYES! sends a clear message to youth that they are important and people care about them. There are minimal barriers to accessing UYES! programs and the door is always open. Agencies are working together for their benefit and there is consistency and accountability with information shared across agencies. The UYES! model is more than an approach; it is a perspective gained from understanding youth and their need to move from survival towards autonomy in an accepting and safe environment. Youth have a significant level of trust and comfort with UYES! programs and staff.

03

— Innovative programming, combined with mentorship, supports, and financial interventions and incentives, enable youth to break the generational cycle of poverty. UYES! provides a model unique to New Brunswick and possibly to Canada. UYES! is a vitally important program and its continued operation is essential to meeting the needs of at-risk youth in Saint John.

UYES! Glossary of terms and acronyms

Adult High School Diploma (AHSD) is an accelerated version of a high school diploma offered in the Province of New Brunswick. UYES! is unique in offering this option in a community setting with wraparound supports.

Case Management is primarily the role of case managers at the Teen Resource Centre (TRC), to assist youth in removing barriers, achieving their goals, and attaining stability in their lives.

Coaching is mainly provided by staff at the Learning Exchange, to assist youth in setting and achieving goals related to education and employment.

Financial interventions are provided immediately to youth to reduce specific barriers, such as food bills, bus fare, or housing costs, and thereby stabilize a young person's situation.

Financial Incentives are goal-based payments used by staff to encourage and reward a young person's participation as they work to identify and achieve their goals.

GED or General Educational Development. By passing all five GED tests, someone who has not completed high school can earn the equivalent of a high-school diploma.

GOALS or Growing Occupational, Academic, and Life Skills is a pre-employment skills training program accredited by the Saint John school district. GOALS participants earn Alternative High School Diploma credits while developing soft skills and exploring career options.

Housing First is a pilot partnership between the Learning Exchange, Teen Resource Centre, and Housing Alternatives to house up to 35 youth aged 15-30 who are struggling with insecure housing. Participants receive financial rent subsidies and case management support.

Mental Health Outreach Coordinator provides on-site mental health services to young people in response to their needs and with little or no wait time.

Outflow Carpentry Training Program delivered by Outflow Ministry, provides basic carpentry and construction skills training to UYES! youth over a four-month period. The carpentry training modules are recognized by the school district for a high school credit.

UYES! provides flexible opportunities for youth to learn, work, and grow personal networks, as well as assistance to navigate and surmount personal barriers. In these ways, it empowers youth to identify and achieve their own goals in education and employment.

WESLinks is a Soft Skills Series to build the confidence as well as the skills essential to success in the workforce, including communication, collaboration, time management, stress management, problem solving, and conflict resolution.

WorkLinks provides individualized coaching to help job seekers develop a plan for employment and address all aspects of searching for a job, getting a job, and keeping a job. If appropriate, they are connected to local employers offering jobs for which participants are eligible to apply.

Wraparound supports refers to a range of services (guidance, counselling, coaching, follow-up, and advocacy) that case managers, coaches, and mental health outreach coordinator can provide immediately in response to the needs of youth.