



## Co-creation in the real world – insights from the CCYP team

*Purpose: Learn from CCYP practitioners on the value of using a youth co-creation model to solve your next workforce development challenge*

### Co-creation in Action at CCYP

In March 2023, we set out to connect with youth across Canada to understand how youth felt about skill development and the workforce. We held 13 co-creation sessions with 108 youth from across the country, including Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia.

In each session, we spent time for discussion and solution generation. Sessions were assigned specific focus questions on Skill Development and Youth Relationship with Work.

### The Design Questions

#### Skill Development Session

- *Who is responsible for skills development?*
- *What changes do youth wish to see in the workforce?*

#### Youth Relationships with Work

- *How do youth feel about their place in the workforce?*
- *What type of relationship do youth have with work?*
- *How did the pandemic affect their place in the workforce?*
- *What are youth priorities when it comes to looking for a job?*

**How did the co-creation experience go? Hear from our facilitators Aria and Sarah below.**



## Meet Youth Facilitator Aria

### **What was the highlight for you facilitating the experience?**

Being able to provide a safe space for other youth to share their thoughts and feelings – many of which I was able to resonate with!

### **How did you guide the conversations? Did anything come as a surprise?**

Being able to read the room and adjusting the tone of the focus group to match that. I was surprised how each group varied so much depending on time of day and amount of people in a focus group.

### **What advice would you give to others that are facilitating a youth focus group or co-creation?**

Be engaging. Engaging with the participants and allowing them the space to share will give you prime results that will help your focus groups and the information that comes out of it. You can be engaging by the tone and types of questions asked, incorporating some more “hands-on” tasks (like Jamboards), or by validating the responses of each participant.

### **What would you tell an employer that is considering how to connect with youth in the workforce?**

Be open-minded. Youth have very valuable lived-experiences and acknowledging that is the first step. They are equal to other counterparts in the workforce and should be treated like that.

### **Any tips, tricks or must have technologies?**

Having a script almost felt like a cheat code. It is so helpful and makes guiding the facilitation so much easier when there are written prompts in the script as well, like turn on recording, turn on closed captioning, etc.



## Meet Youth Facilitator Sarah

### **What was the highlight for you facilitating the experience?**

The focus groups were a great opportunity to meet, engage and hear from so many incredible young people across the country. I was amazed at how in every single focus group there was a sense of solidarity among participants – even if their circumstances were so vastly different. All they wanted was to see each other succeed!

### **How did you guide the conversations? Did anything come as a surprise?**

I was intimidated to guide the conversation because there is this sense that you have to control the direction of the conversation. In a way, as a facilitator you will be guiding the discussion and to do that you need to start by creating a safe space for participants to feel comfortable sharing in. But keep in mind the genuine conversations, the honest reactions, and discussions that you really want will come when you listen attentively and let participants steer the conversation.

### **What advice would you give to others that are facilitating a youth focus group or co-creation?**

Facilitating is 80% listening and 20% talking, just like many conversations we have in our day to day life. Treat the discussion as a genuine conversation where you are actively listening, asking questions, and making sure everyone feels welcome and comfortable. Young people want to talk, meet others, and engage in all sorts of conversations, know that and you'll do great.

### **What would you tell an employer that is considering how to connect with youth in the workforce?**

Interacting and connecting with young people is about understanding where they're coming from and listening to them. Youth often feel as if their voices are not being heard. If you want to connect with youth, take the time to actively listen to them and care about what they are saying. You don't have to learn slang or throw in gen z terms to connect with youth, all youth want is to be heard and have their opinions and ideas taken seriously. If you can show up, listen to them and then work with them to create a solution, you'll find that connection you're looking for.



### **Any tips, tricks or must have technologies?**

Create a detailed script that outlines everything you are going to say, any actions you need to take when facilitating and also include reminders to pause when you're speaking.

Get into the habit of sitting with awkward silences and pauses. Those are the moments when participants tend to go more in depth about their thoughts, and it usually brings out the best answers and responses from participants.

Once the focus group is over, take a few moments to debrief what was said with a co-facilitator or just alone.