



Youth Insights: Understating barriers and creating solutions with youth in the workplace

Purpose: This insight report provides a snapshot of youth lived experience in the workplace and potential solutions, created by youth for youth. Use this data below to help kickstart your knowledge.

In March of 2023, the Youth Engagement Strategies team at the Canadian Council for Youth Prosperity (CCYP) facilitated a series of focus groups titled “Where Are All The Youth?”. The focus groups aimed to engage youth in a discussion centered on youth’s perception and understanding of the workforce. Over the course of a month, the youth engagement strategies team successfully held 13 focus groups, meeting and discussing with 108 youth participants between the ages of 15 to 30 from across Canada. Check out what youth told us about their lived experience and their own solutions for these challenges.

**Theme:
Skill Development****The Design Questions:**

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

What youth told us about their lived experience:**Youth Expectations**

There are supports for workforce entry.

There are school to work connections.

Youth are upskilling.

Youth Reality

Youth felt there was a lack of available support for them after graduating from post-secondary institutions. Youth shared feelings of being thrown into the workforce prepared.

Youth perceived a lack of communication between employers and education institutions. Youth shared that only fields within STEM have strong relations with schools, suggesting not all school pathways have strong labour market connections

Youth shared that they are trying to upskill, which may not be the same beliefs held by employers. Youth try to contribute to competitiveness of workforce.

What ideas youth generated:**Idea #1**

Build access to mentors, alumni, and workshops.

Idea #2

Increase support from educational institutions after graduation.

Idea #3

Treat youth as equal counterparts.

Idea #4

Change preconceptions of youth work ethic and upskilling from negative to positive.

Idea #5

Place increased value in youth lived experience to demonstrate skills.

Idea #6

Create more opportunities for co-op and internship placements across ALL fields and institutions.



**Theme:
Youth Relationships
with Work**

The Design Questions:

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?

What youth told us about their lived experience:

Youth Expectations

Employers only see previous employment as valid experience.

Work is the top priority for young people.

Employers believe they have inclusive and safe workplaces.

Youth Reality

Youth have a different understanding of what can be seen as valid work experience. Youth gain experience and qualifications from numerous places, but those experiences are not seen as valid by employers.

There has been a cultural shift in youth's relationship with work. Work is not their top priority, rather they are finding ways to incorporate work into their lifestyle.

Young people want to work in spaces where employers take Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion seriously, and accommodate accordingly. They are having a difficult time finding such spaces.

What ideas youth generated:

Idea #1

Change employer understanding of youth's relevant skills and how they connect to jobs.

Idea #2

Validate ALL youth experience, even if it does not come from previous paid employment.

Idea #3

Prioritize the health, safety and wellbeing of youth employees in the workplace.



Idea #4 Create a flexible work environment and provide flexible work options.	Idea #5 Create roles that allow youth to do meaningful work.	Idea #6 Take proactive steps to provide accommodations and reduce barriers to access
Idea #7 Take proactive steps to provide accommodations and reduce barriers to access.		