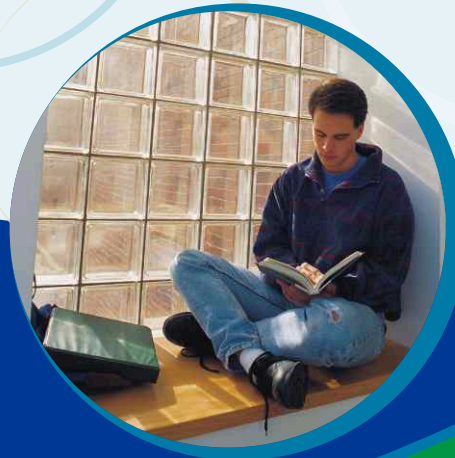


MOVING FORWARD:



Employment Programs for Youth at Risk in the City of Hamilton



Prepared by
Sarah Wayland, PhD

for the
Hamilton Skills
Development Flagship




Hamilton Training Advisory Board
Commission consultative sur la formation à Hamilton



Hamilton

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COLLEGE OF APPLIED ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY



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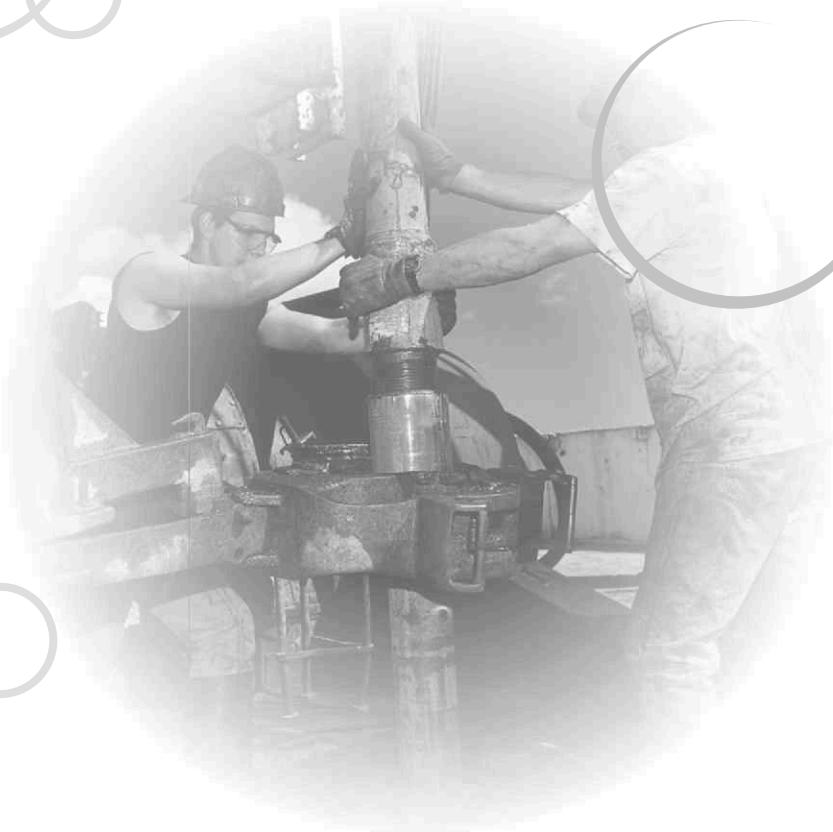
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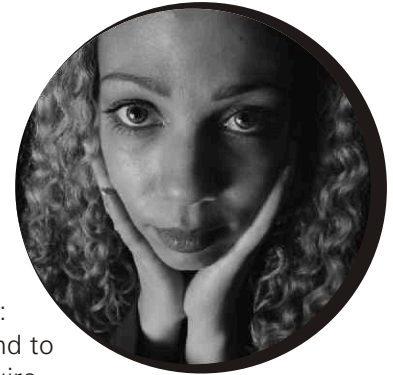
MOVING FORWARD: Employment Programs for Youth at Risk in the City of Hamilton 



Executive Summary

Today's young Canadians are responsible for present and future social and economic development in Canada. As such, it is vital that they reach their full potential in terms of employability, earnings, and the development of human and social capital.

This report focuses youth who are the most likely to fall short of their potential: high school dropouts. They are also known as "youth at risk" because they tend to fare worse in every single important life outcome compared to those who acquire more education. These individuals comprise 10 to 30% of the youth population.



What steps can be taken to help these youth at risk move forward with their lives? This report examines one key aspect of moving forward. It reviews issues pertaining to employment for youth at risk, including barriers to finding employment and suggestions for program changes to improve the employment prospects of youth in the City of Hamilton. The title "Moving Forward" refers to youth themselves and also to programming possibilities in this area. To this end, the report contains a literature review of youth employment in Canada and at the local level; key findings from local service providers, youth, and other experts concerning employment needs and programming; a table of existing local programs and services that address youth employment issues; a table of noteworthy youth employment programs in other Canadian and American cities, including key ingredients for their success; and questions to guide decision-making about future employment-oriented programming.

Literature Review

Youth is a chronological age (15 to 30 in the Government of Canada's own youth-oriented programs) as well as a process in a person's life, during which time they make a transition into adulthood. Youth in Canada are characterized by unemployment rates well above those of the general population.

Across Canada, the high school dropout rate for males (13%) was significantly higher than that for females (7%). The unemployment rate of dropouts was 19%, roughly double that of other youth age 20 to 24. High school dropouts are also the most likely to be chronically unemployed. As these young persons age, it is increasingly unlikely that they will return to school successfully. There is a direct correlation between low levels of reading literacy and failure to complete high school.

In Hamilton, the proportion of youth living in poverty exceeds the provincial average by 6%, and youth are more likely to experience food insecurity. High school dropout rates in Hamilton are around 30%.

Youth are characterized by incredible diversity and thus have divergent needs. Women, persons with disabilities, Aboriginals, immigrants, visible minorities, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth, and others each face their own challenges in terms of entering the labour force.

Employment Programming for Youth at Risk: Primary Research Findings

Project research included interviews with service providers and experts in Hamilton and other parts of Canada as well as an informal consultation with some youth enrolled in a Hamilton employment program. Findings are presented according to key themes.

Challenges and frustrations

Youth at risk face many challenges, including all the challenges associated with living in poverty. Youth at risk are also challenged by their lack of “life skills” and their social attitudes. Service providers believe that many youth lack focus in their lives, and that it is difficult for them to set goals and work towards fulfilling them. The youth interviewed for this study felt that it was difficult to obtain the work experience and the references required to access good jobs. They also stated that lack of education and the existence of a criminal record were barriers to employment. Transportation is a big concern for youth. Lastly, some of the youth stated being unemployed in general left them feeling unmotivated and unwanted.

Service providers also face challenges, such as the low profile and prestige of their work in the community, negative attitudes about youth held by many employers, constraints imposed by the funding they receive, and the precarious nature of some funding.

Key elements of program content for youth at risk

1. There is a general consensus among persons interviewed for this project as well as in the literature on youth development that youth at risk benefit from “life skills”-oriented pre-employment programs, including a focus on developing a work ethic, communication skills, anger management, the ability to work with others and take directions, and organizational habits. At present, some emphasis on life skills is incorporated into many pre-employment programs, but they are not very prominent because programs generally are not funded for teaching life skills.
2. The most successful pre-employment programs offer group work with peers combined with one-on-one counselling.
3. Many service providers and youth said they would like to see more programs that contained a work placement, ideally with pay. Combined classroom and work placement is one of the best models.
4. Young persons gain a sense of achievement by progressing through a program that contains several discrete stages that each end with some recognition and reward.
5. Lastly, research indicates that most employment is found through social networks, yet employment programs often fail to discuss the importance of networks with clients.

Key elements of good program delivery

1. Long-term ties to a counsellor or mentor. The quality of relationship between youth and staff workers is very important, and having staff from similar backgrounds can be ideal. After the young person secures employment, maintaining a relationship with the counsellor can help him or her to work through problems at work and to manage conflicts when someone acts wrongly.
2. Strong relationships with employers. This is an essential component of any employment-related program for youth at risk. Building strong relationships with employers includes (1) marketing of the program to employers and (2) educating them about the benefits and challenges of hiring youth. Building good relationships with schools and school boards is also desirable.

3. Accessibility and location. Any program aimed at youth must be readily accessible by public transit. Another consideration is whether the program is delivered through an employment centre or a neighbourhood house/community centre. If the latter, then there is an opportunity to offer a more holistic approach to youth.
4. Continuous intake. When a young person makes the decision to seek assistance, the agency he or she approaches must be able to help them immediately, not tell them to come back when the next session starts weeks or months in the future.
5. Sustainability. Programs take years to become established and to develop networks with employers and the broader community. Program success is thus enhanced by stable funding.
6. Ongoing program measurement and evaluation. Organizations that perform well are constantly improving. They improve through innovation and learning, which includes monitoring, measuring, and evaluating their own work. Evaluations should be viewed as opportunities for learning on the part of both the program deliverer and the program funder, not as a threat for removing funding.

Features of Hamilton

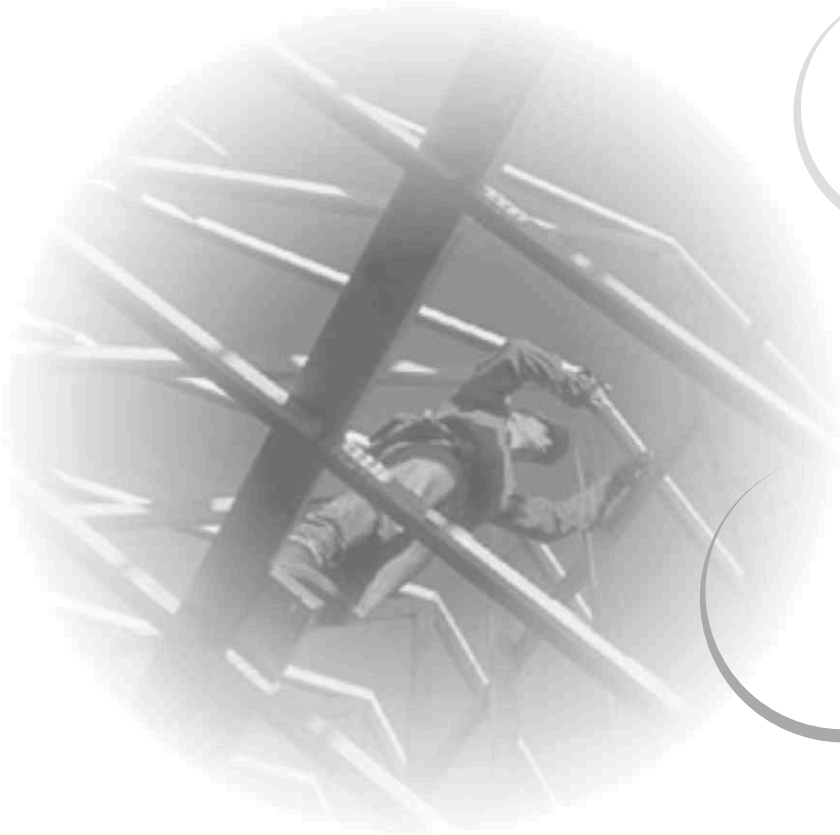
Hamilton has particular challenges in terms of youth employment, notably the high poverty and dropout rates among youth in the city. However, it is well-networked for a city of its size. The presence of the Employment Assistance Resource Network (EARN) and the Youth Employment Network (YEN) keeps service providers and other stakeholders informed and well-connected. The Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction is another positive feature. Its focus on “Making Hamilton the Best Place to Raise a Child” complements efforts to address employment issues for youth at risk.

Comparison to Other Research Findings

Previous research in Hamilton identified some of the same concerns outlined in this research, notably the need for more opportunities for youth to have work experience, more opportunities for pre-employment and life skills training, and more collaboration between schools, local employers, employment service providers and government. A needs assessment of street-involved and homeless youth in Hamilton found a lack of mentoring, counselling and emotional support available to these youth at risk. Recommendations called for the creation of multi-stakeholder initiatives and holistic supports around education and employment, including more pre-employment programming.

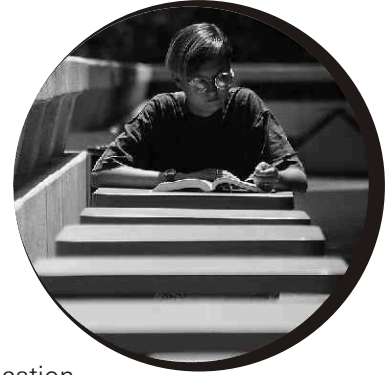
Many, if not most, of the key ingredients for success identified in this research are also found to be important in large-scale American research projects and policy initiatives. Some of these common principles or “best practices” are: implementation quality; caring, knowledgeable adults; high standards and expectations; importance of community; a holistic approach; youth as resources/community service and service-learning; work-based learning; and long-term services/support and follow-up.

The four “lesson learned” from the *Jobs Initiative* of the Annie E. Casey Foundation were: to engage employers as collaborators in the process of workforce development; to focus on employee retention and advancement as much as on initial job placement; to build collaboration among all affected stakeholders, including low-income workers, employers, elected officials, community-based organizations, government agencies, and others; and to build organizational capacity through adequate financial support, technical assistance, networking opportunities, and other resources that enable them to design more effective, accountable, and outcomes-oriented programs.



1.0 Introduction

Demographic trends such as the aging of Canadian society, the possibility of a smaller workforce, and potential labour shortages mean that present and future young Canadians will increasingly be responsible for social and economic development in this country. Enabling them to reach their full potential in terms of employability, earnings, and the development of human and social capital are vital for Canada's continued growth and well-being. The strong correlation between education and employment underscores the importance of ensuring that young people have opportunities for acquiring education as well as for furthering their credentials if they so desire.



This report focuses on that segment of youth who are the most in danger of failing to meet their potential: those who have not completed high school, often referred to as “dropouts.” They are also known as “youth at risk” because they tend to fare worse in every single important life outcome compared to those who acquire more education: they earn less; they are more likely to be unemployed, dependent on social assistance and other welfare programs, and to experience incarceration; they have more accidents, poorer health, and shorter lives; and they are less engaged in their communities and have lower levels of tolerance (Levin 2004: 3). These individuals comprise 10 to 30% of the youth population.¹

For those young people who are not immediately interested in returning to school, what steps can be taken to help them move forward with their lives? This report provides a foundation for decision-making around this question. The title “Moving Forward” refers to youth themselves and also to programming possibilities in this area. Its objective is to review issues pertaining to employment for youth at risk, including barriers to finding employment and suggestions for program changes to improve the employment prospects of youth in the City of Hamilton. To this end, the report contains the following components:

- a literature review of youth employment in Canada and at the local level;
- key findings from local service providers, youth, and other experts concerning employment needs and programming;
- a table of existing local programs and services that address youth employment issues;
- a table of noteworthy youth employment programs in other Canadian and American cities, including key ingredients for their success; and
- questions to guide decision-making about future employment-oriented programming.



¹ Dropout figures vary according to region and also by how “dropping out” is defined. In Ontario in 2005, 29% of grade 12 students did not receive enough credits to graduate. However, many of those youth will likely obtain their high school diploma eventually. According to the 2001 Canadian Census, 27% of 22- to 24-year-olds had no secondary school certificate. Yet the Youth in Transition Survey, which tracks the same respondents at two-year intervals found that, at age 22 to 24, almost 90% of respondents had received their high school diploma.

2.0 Literature Review



2.1 Youth in Canada: Employment and Education

Youth is a period of life that is often defined by chronological age, usually the teen years but also extending into the early to mid-twenties. The Government of Canada targets persons aged 15 to 30 in its own youth-oriented programs. Youth is also a process in a person's life, during which time they make a transition into adulthood that may include acquiring education and moving into the workforce, leaving the family home and forming significant relationships with others (including possibly starting a family), and assuming the rights and responsibilities of being a citizen and a member of a community.

Data on Canadians aged 15 to 30 has been collected in various government surveys, including the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, Youth in Transition Survey, Health Behaviours in School-Aged Children, Statistics Canada Census, and Labour Force Survey. Information extracted from these sources indicates that Canada's youth population increased by 7% from 1993 to 2003. Just over four million Canadians between the ages of 15 and 24 lived in this country in 2003, comprising about 14% of the Canada's total population. Despite recent population growth trends, the proportion of young people in Canada's population is expected to decline in the coming decades, dropping to 11% by 2021 and 10% by 2051 (HRSD 2005).

About half of young people aged 15 to 29 in Canada were attending an educational institution in 2000-2001. At the same time, 60% of young people aged 25 to 29 had already earned a post-secondary diploma. An estimated 70% of future jobs created will require some type of post-secondary education, therefore individuals with less education will have less access to the labour market (HRSD 2005).

Young males aged 15 to 24 have an unemployment rate of 14.9%, the highest among all Canadians, with women of the same age being the second highest at 11.8% (Statistics Canada 2004, cited in Vengris 2005: 14).

The Youth in Transition Survey (YITS) was designed by Statistics Canada and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada to track major transitions in the lives of youth, with a particular focus on transitions between education, training, and work. YITS tracks the same respondents at two-year intervals, the first interval being in 1999 at 18 to 20, the second in 2001 at age 20-22, and the third in 2003 at age 22 to 24. By age 22 to 24, almost 90% of respondents had received their high school diploma. Almost half of those surveyed who had dropped out of high school previously had returned to school at either the secondary or postsecondary level, and 27% had gone on to graduate from high school. Subtracting figures for high school leavers who did take some postsecondary education, the dropout figure was revised down to 9% (Shaienks, Eisl-Culkin and Bussière 2006).

According to YITS, about half of high school dropouts had not returned to high school by the ages of 22 to 24. The evidence suggests that it becomes more difficult for youth to return to school successfully as they get older. Of those who did, between 2001 and 2003, 45% of returnees dropped out again, compared to only 17% between 1999 and 2001 (Shaienks, Eisl-Culkin and Bussière 2006: 10). In 2003, of the high school

dropouts who had no postsecondary education, 62% were working full time, 10% were working part-time, and 28% were not working at all (Shaienks, Eisl-Culkin and Bussière 2006: 20).

Across Canada, the high school dropout rate for males (13%) was significantly higher than that for females (7%). The unemployment rate of dropouts was 19%, roughly double that of other youth age 20 to 24 (Shaienks, D., J. Eisl-Culkin and P. Bussière. 2006: 9).

Education has a direct bearing on one's employment prospects. Indeed, research indicates that education has a much greater positive impact on employment opportunities than does working experience. The job prospects of a poorly-educated person will not improve as they age, unless they get more education (De Broucker 2005).

The transition from acquiring education to entering the workforce is not clear-cut for many young people. Many youth work either full-time or part-time while attending school, or they may return to school to upgrade their skills while continuing to work. Many students enter the workforce immediately after high school, or leave school to work. The present emphasis on preparation for post-secondary education in most Canadian high schools can mean that the needs of students not following this path are overlooked. Greater flexibility in the high school curriculum – including vocational-oriented alternatives, apprenticeships, and work-study combinations – may ease their transition into the labour market. More importantly, it may encourage youth at risk of dropping out to stay in school.

● 2.2 Characteristics of Young Adults with Low Levels of Education

Research by Statistics Canada found “disinterest with school” to be the main reason cited by 18- to 20-year-olds for leaving school prior to graduating. “Getting kicked out” was the second reason given. There were differences in terms of gender as well: 17% of males dropped out because they wanted to work, compared to 7% of females. 13% of females cited pregnancy or childcare responsibilities as reasons for dropping out. Almost every dropout surveyed stated that, eventually, they would like to acquire a least a high school education (Kruchak 2006).

Aside from not having completed high school, what characteristics does this population have in common? In Canada, high school dropouts who participated in YITS shared something of a demographic profile that differed from that of graduates: they were more likely to be male, parents or spouses themselves, first-language French, and to come from single-parent and/or large families. Dropouts were three times more likely than graduates to have parents who had not completed high school (HRSD 2005).

Research shows a positive correlation between reading literacy and graduation from high school, and also with pursuit of post-secondary education. Specifically, students who are better readers are more likely to graduate from high school. The absence of literacy skills and educational credentials creates barriers to employment, reduces financial security, and impacts negatively on social outcomes (Knighton and Bussière 2006).

They are also less likely to participate in the labour force, according to research conducted by Canadian Policy Research Networks and OECD on “young adults with low levels of education,” defined as persons aged 20 to 24 who do not have a high school diploma and are not enrolled in any type of education or work-study



program. The employment rate of these individuals was 58%, compared to 80% for high school and trade school graduates and 86% for college and university graduates (De Broucker 2005: 22). Jobs held by persons lacking high school credentials were less likely to be stable, permanent, and full-time than jobs held by persons with higher levels of education. Twenty-four percent of employed persons in this category had held their jobs for less than six months (De Broucker 2005: 38).

Using data from the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (SLID) from 1993 to 2001, Statistics Canada research on chronic unemployment found that individuals without a high school diploma were over-represented in both the chronically unemployed population, and the always unemployed population (Brooks 2005). Conversely, they were under-represented among individuals who were seldom unemployed. High school leavers accounted for 20% of the labour force, but they represented 38% of the chronically unemployed and 51% of those who had not found a job during their time in the labour force. These proportions were higher than those for any other group in the study.

2.3 Youth Sub-populations

Youth are defined by a common age range and their place along the developmental path that leads from childhood to adulthood. Otherwise, they are characterized by incredible diversity in terms of cultural background, socioeconomic status, interest, and ability. Programming aimed at youth must be cognizant of this diversity, including awareness of the divergent needs of members of the following groups whose members are found among youth at risk:

- 1 Women.** Women are more likely to leave school for family reasons, including parenthood, than are men. Young women benefit more than men from achieving higher levels of education: their employment rates are below those of men at all levels of education, but the gap decreases for women with more education. Also, the least-educated women are the least likely to be in the labour force (De Broucker 2005: 26-27).
- 2 Persons with disabilities.** In 2001, 12% of Canadians indicated that they had a disability. For young people, the main types of disability including limited activity resulting from pain, learning disabilities, and mobility problems. Census data reveals that disabled youth were less likely to complete high school than were those without a disability (HRSD 2005).
- 3 Aboriginals.** In general, young Aboriginals have fewer educational credentials than other youth, they face more disadvantages in the labour force than do other youth with the same level of education, and they are over-represented in the criminal justice system. In contrast to demographic trends among other Canadian populations, Aboriginals are a younger population. About 50% of Aboriginals are under the age of 25 (HRSD 2005).
- 4 Immigrants.** More than half a million young immigrants live in Canada, mostly in Canada's largest cities. They tend to have similar levels of education as young Canadians, but they have lower labour market participation, possibly due to barriers entering the workforce such as unfamiliarity with Canadian labour market practices and lack of Canadian work experience (Anisef and Kilbride 2000). For those arriving in Canada after childhood, especially women, the employment outlook is poorer than for those who are schooled entirely in Canada. Immigrants who are visible minorities are more likely to be unemployed than immigrants who are not visible minorities (Kunz 2003).

Other groups of youth who have particular needs include persons who have experienced incarceration, persons with mental illness, and substance abusers. Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth also face challenges, including possibilities of discrimination in the workplace.

● 2.4 Youth in Hamilton

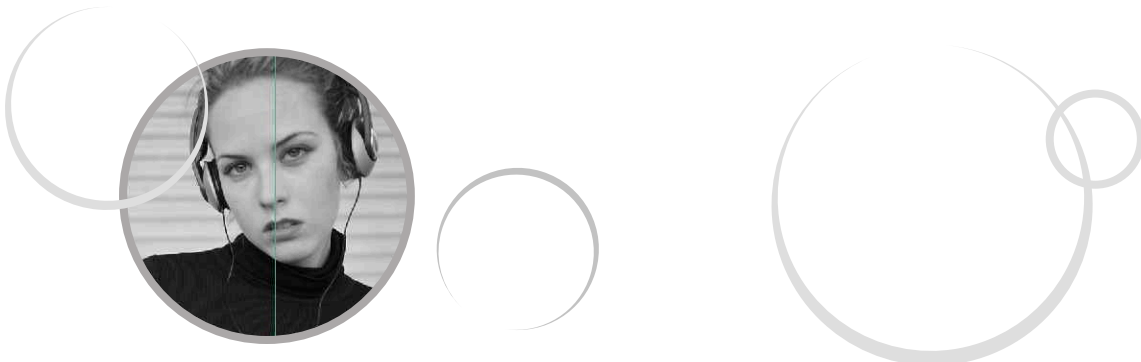
The City of Hamilton's *Youth Scan Indicators 2006* (Powell 2006) provides comparative data about various aspects of the lives of youth in Hamilton. Some data in this document covers the Hamilton Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) – the City of Hamilton, Burlington, and Grimsby – from the 2001 Census. According to the 2001 Census, the employment activity for youth aged 15 to 24 was consistent with figures for the province as a whole: 14% worked full-time for the year 2000, 58% worked part year or part-time, and 28.5% did not work. Their average income from all sources – including employment income and government transfer payments – was \$10,465, just above the provincial average.

Census data also showed that 38% of youth aged 15 to 24 in the City of Hamilton were not attending schools, compared to 35% for Ontario as a whole. Fifteen percent identified themselves as a visible minority, including aboriginal origin, and 14% stated that they had been or were at the time permanent residents ("landed immigrants") of Canada.

Also according to the Census, in the City of Hamilton, over 22% of youths aged 12 to 18 lived in households with income below the Low Income Cut Off (LICO) threshold, defined as low-income households. This figure is significantly higher than the 16% figure for the province as whole.

That youth in Hamilton are more likely to experience the effects of living in poverty is born out in findings from another relevant survey. According to the Canadian Community Health Survey of 2000/2001, almost 20% of residents of the City Hamilton aged 12 to 19 had experienced some food insecurity in the past twelve months, compared to 15% of the equivalent province-wide population (cited in Powell 2006: 15).

The high school dropout rates in the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board and the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board are around 30% (Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction 2006: 8; Kruchak 2006). Of the grade 9 students who entered HWDSB in 2000, 67% graduated within five years, compared to 72% for this cohort provincially (HWDSB 2006). These figures are based on persons who failed to complete Grade 12 on time and do not take into account persons who return at a later date to complete their high school education.



3.0 Employment Programming for Youth at Risk: Primary Research Findings



Project research included interviews with service providers and experts in Hamilton and other parts of Canada as well as an informal consultation with some youth enrolled in a Hamilton employment program. Specifically, the research consisted of the following:

1. A focus group of 15 youth employment service providers in Hamilton. Several individuals from the focus group were contacted afterwards for follow-up discussion and to solicit further information. In addition, interviews were conducted with two individuals from key service providers unable to attend the group discussion.
2. Interview with the outgoing Chair of the Youth Employment Network.
3. Interviews with two individuals outside of Hamilton who have expertise in youth-oriented research and programming.
4. Roundtable discussion with nine current participants in the City of Hamilton's Youth Track program. The Youth Track staff members were not in the room during the discussion.

The purpose of the focus group and interviews was to identify (1) challenges and frustrations experienced by youth and service providers, (2) characteristics of successful employment-related programs with youth at risk, and (3) distinctive features of Hamilton that are viewed as strengths or weaknesses in terms of service provision to youth.

The findings from these interviews and the focus group are synthesized below, where they are presented according to key themes. "Characteristics of successful programs" has been divided into two categories: program content and program delivery.

3.1 Challenges and frustrations

Facing Youth

According to service providers, the youth they encounter in their work face many challenges, including all the challenges associated with living in poverty. Youth at risk are also challenged by their lack of life skills (including problem-solving, organizing, teamwork) and their social attitudes (including lack of self-control, poor self-esteem, blaming others, not asserting own needs).

They believe that many youth lack focus in their lives, and that it is difficult for them to set goals and work towards fulfilling them. Youth were seen as often taking work for short-term gain instead of developing the

skills needed to obtain longer-term, better employment. At the same time, youth may have unrealistic expectations, expecting make \$15 or \$20 an hour right away rather than working their way up from lower-paid positions.

Some youth face particular challenges, for example those related to cultural, racialized or linguistic identity, including poor English skills and the lack of support in Hamilton for francophones. Many youth at risk have substance abuse or mental health issues, yet no programs in Hamilton target these youth at risk. Women, aboriginals, and disabled youth each have their own sets of distinctive challenges.

The youth interviewed for this study identified other challenges and frustrations. They felt that it was difficult to obtain the work experience and the references required to access good jobs. They also stated that lack of education and the existence of a criminal record were barriers to employment. Some youth felt that Hamilton did not have a lot of suitable jobs, and that “baby boomers” were not retiring early enough to make room for younger workers. They also discussed being stereotyped by employers and being judged based on their appearance as opposed to whether they could actually do the work required. Transportation is a big concern for youth as having transportation is essentially a prerequisite for employment. It was felt that public transit was inadequate in Hamilton, especially for persons working late at night.

Lastly, some of the youth stated that it was difficult to get motivated. Being in the Youth Track program gave them something to get up for in the morning, but being unemployed in general left them feeling unmotivated and unwanted. To them, a good job consisted of stable, long-term employment with benefits. At the same time, few of them could articulate any steps they would take to achieve that vision, nor identify the field in which they wanted to work.

For Service Providers

Service providers spoke of a lack of awareness by the broader public of the challenges facing youth and those working with youth. According to the service providers, youth work is not very high-profile in the community. Moreover, there can be a stigma attached to it, and many employers have negative attitudes about youth. It was stated that employers need to be educated as to how they might provide better entry-level, basic training for youth.

Service providers also felt constrained by the funding they receive. The focus of most programs is job skills, and some service providers felt pressured to get jobs for clients even if the jobs are not a good fit with clients’ abilities and interests. They noted an emphasis on data collection and numbers more than on the suitability of employment found.

They also noted the precarious nature of some funding. For example, the Futures program was a 16-week program that helped clients deal with life issues as a means to acquiring employment. This successful pre-employment program was discontinued in 1995 when a Conservative government was elected in Ontario. In addition, they stated that many good pilot projects have existed in Hamilton, but that even successful pilots are not necessarily given sustainable funding. In response, one funder noted that they themselves are limited by legislation in terms of what they can fund and acknowledged that funding does not always match the needs of clients and potential clients.

● 3.2 Key elements of program content for youth at risk

Life skills training

There is a general consensus among persons interviewed for this project as well as in the literature on youth development that youth at risk benefit from “life skills”-oriented pre-employment programs. Whereas many funders and policy-makers today want to proceed directly to workforce training and hard skills development, youth benefit from acquiring more intangible “life skills” such as developing a work ethic, communication skills, anger management, the ability to work with others and take directions, and organizational habits. In other words, youth development should be a focus alongside workforce development, constituting a more holistic strategy of workforce entry. At present, Canada is much better served in the area of youth employment programs than in terms of youth development programs. Yet many employers would rather hire a person with intangible qualities that enable them to be trained and retrained than someone with hard skills but lacking life skills. In the words of one employer, “I hire the smile and train the worker.”

According to service providers, the principal focus of life skills learning should be on developing a work ethic: showing up for work, punctuality, developing a routine and health habits such as taking a lunch break, and meeting appointments. It also includes anticipating the employers' needs and taking initiative where appropriate.

Other life skills identified include learning to work in teams, conflict resolution skills, interpersonal skills, communication skills, and computer and basic literacy skills. Some service providers consulted for this project pointed to the links between failure to complete high school and low literacy. They felt that any employment program targeting high school leavers should include some literacy and/or numeracy component.

Life skills programming could complement the Essential Skills research conducted by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. As profiled on the Essential Skills website, “Essential Skills are the skills needed for work, learning and life. They provide the foundation for learning all other skills and enable people to evolve with their jobs and adapt to workplace change.” An extensive research process identified nine Essential Skills that are used in nearly every occupation as well as in daily life: reading text, document use, numeracy, writing, oral communication, working with others, continuous learning, thinking skills, and computer use.

At present, some emphasis on life skills is incorporated into many pre-employment programs, but they are not very prominent because programs generally are not funded for teaching life skills. Moreover, there are distinct sets of life skills for different phases of a young person's life. The kinds of skills they need to develop to get a job must be supplemented by others required to keep that job and be promoted. Ideally, youth should have access to ongoing life skills training after they have entered the workforce. This training should include basics such as communication in the workplace, dealing with authority, and time management. Youth who are earning money and possibly living independently for the first time face many pressures, including from friends who want to borrow money or move in or from poor financial management and overspending. Youth who make mistakes and lose their jobs may not be eligible to go through another employment program. Curricula in this area would focus on work-life balance, stress management, money management, and review of conflict management. One option would be to create an ongoing support group for youth in the workforce.

Group work combined with individual counselling

The most successful pre-employment programs offer group work with peers combined with one-on-one counselling. Programs should incorporate activities that cater to a variety of learning styles, such as hands-on activities, role playing, and bringing in guest speakers. Building some flexibility into the programming so that it can accommodate special needs – e.g., newcomer status, parenthood, counselling needs – is ideal.

Work experience

Other components of an ideal program include work experience, ideally with pay. No classroom experience can adequately simulate actual work experience, and this kind of experience is highly desired by youth. Programs that contain a work component provide short-term experience and the opportunity for participants to deal with work-related challenges while still under the supervision of a counsellor.

Combined classroom and work placement is one of the best models. Some programs offer classroom instruction in the mornings and work placement in afternoons, or classroom time one or two days a week and work placement for the rest of the week. Apprenticeship programs and mentoring relationships are greatly sought after. Volunteer experience is acceptable, according to youth interviewed, but they preferred that any volunteering somehow pertain to their work interests.

Stages and incentives

Young persons gain a sense of achievement by progressing through a program that contains several discrete stages that each end with some recognition and reward. This is an important component of the Tri-Rock program for street-involved youth in Hamilton. Participants are given incentives at each stage of the program, and they receive a stipend upon successful completion of the Tri-Rock program. (See Fraser 2004 for more details of this and other aspects of the Tri-Rock program.)

Developing social networks

Lastly, research indicates that most employment is found through social networks, yet employment programs often fail to discuss the importance of networks with clients. In terms of teaching job-search skills, it is easier to cover resume and letter writing than to discuss how to build an employment network, but the latter are stronger predictors of long-term employment success. Programs that have demonstrated longer-term success emphasize the importance of networks.

3.3 Key elements of good program delivery

Long-term ties to a counsellor or mentor

The quality of relationship between youth and staff workers is very important, particularly for youth at risk who may lack the presence of a caring adult in their lives. A youth's prospects are bolstered by a solid relationship built on mutual respect and trust. Having staff from similar backgrounds can work well, so that youth identify with their counsellor and do not feel intimidated. All staff members involved in youth programs must be aware of the development issues youth face, and they should participate in some form of ongoing professional development.

The presence of a supportive adult is not limited to active interventions in the life of a youth. It involves listening, validating, and providing various opportunities for youth development. Part of that development

involves creating space where youth can make their own decisions and assume responsibilities for themselves and others.

After the young person secures employment, maintaining a relationship with the counsellor can help him or her to work through problems at work and to manage conflicts when someone acts wrongly. Some counsellors have agreements with employers that they be contacted directly by the employer if any difficult situations arise. In this way, they can even serve as mediators between youth and their employers. One service provider noted that employers are not perfect, and they themselves might benefit from “life skills” reminders.

At Hamilton’s Threshold School of Building, an organization that helps youth enter the building trades, mentors are sought to help instil life skills. Having a mentor in the construction industry who treats the youth as an equal really boosts their self-esteem and helps them overcome the stigmatism of being on welfare. Any program that depends on mentors must ensure that they receive adequate training and supervision.

Strong relationships with employers

This element is missing from most employment programs because it takes considerable effort, but it is an essential component of any employment-related program for youth at risk. Building strong relationships with employers includes (1) marketing of the program to employers and (2) educating them about the benefits and challenges of hiring youth.

Marketing involves raising awareness of the program in the wider community and among employers in particular. Some agencies develop explicit strategies to do this, while others take advantage of any opportunity to get the word out about their program. For example, the executive director of one Hamilton service provider visited over 200 local companies to build contacts. This person felt it was important to promote the program by visiting potential work placement sites, trade shows, conferences, and the like. A benefit of marketing is that it enables employers and interested parties to contact the agency as opposed to always putting the onus on the agency for outreach.

Some programs have “job developers” whose sole task is to identify potential employers and develop relationships with them. A particular challenge is soliciting interest from the small and medium-sized firms that comprise the bulk of employers. Wherever possible, employers should be treated as partners with the employment service as opposed to clients who are doing the service a favour by employing youth. Financial incentives to hire youth are certainly helpful, but relationships must be built that transcend this financial relationship. Some ideas for encouraging employers to “buy in” to the program include granting them public recognition through awards programs and offering “lunch and learn” sessions or workshops that educate them about various youth employment issues. If employers are involved in a work placement program, they should be encouraged to put the youth on their own payroll. This is beneficial to the youth in terms of feeling connected to the employer, and it also makes it that much easier for an employer to hire that youth at the end of work placement.

Just as youth need to have realistic expectations about working, employers need to know what to expect in terms of hiring and supervising youth. They must be prepared to work with youth and be aware of the barriers they face. They may benefit from reducing their expectations in terms of qualification requirements for employees, for example, a reconsideration of the workplace dress code. Employers should also evaluate whether employees really need a high school diploma to do the work in question. Employers should look at the literacy and basic skills required for the tasks as opposed to educational criteria alone.

Another way of building relationships with employers is to send youth to them on a volunteer or trial basis. These “job trials” allow employers to make a low-cost initial assessment about a person, with the possibility that they could hire the youth. For example, the Threshold School of Building sends program participants to employers for a one-day trial with no pay, and then the employer can decide if they want to hire the youth to do more work.

In addition, good relationships with schools can be helpful. School boards need to be brought in and educated on how the works of youth employment programs could complement their efforts.

Accessibility and location

Any program aimed at youth must be readily accessible by public transit. In Hamilton, that means it is likely to be located in the downtown core where most services are already located.

Another consideration is whether the program is delivered through an employment centre or a neighbourhood house/community centre. If the latter, then there is an opportunity to offer a more holistic approach to youth. In addition to accessing employment services, youth would be able to access a broader range of support services. This could be very beneficial to youth at risk, who often need a range of supports that include but extend beyond the employment experience.

Continuous intake

When a young person makes the decision to seek assistance, the agency he or she approaches must be able to help them immediately, not tell them to come back when the next session starts weeks or months in the future. If told to come back at a later date, service providers find that many youth simply never show up again.

The Tri-Rock staff found a way to engage potential program participants on a continual basis while at the same time being able to assess their motivation and work ethic to see if they would be good candidates for the employment program. Interested youth are given volunteer responsibilities in the community kitchen, during which time they get paid in “Tri-Rock bucks” that can be spent in the centre’s food bank, clothing store or on special services such as haircuts. Through this experience, the Tri-Rock staff are able to observe whether the person shows up on time and completes the work assigned. Even if the person never enters the formal employment program, they have contributed to the operations of the centre and felt that their work was valued. (See Fraser 2004 for a detailed explanation of the Tri-Rock intake process.)

Sustainability

Programs take years to become established and to develop networks with employers and the broader community. Moreover, it may be difficult to attract high-quality staff to projects of limited duration. Program success is thus enhanced by stable funding.

Programs that begin with small-scale pilot projects should have the opportunity to develop into larger secure programs if they show promise. Service providers in Hamilton noted that, in some cases, even when the pilot program was successful, service providers cannot obtain funding to run the program again. An example was a program that offered a 26-week paid work placement for ten single parents in the childcare field. All ten participants successfully completed the program and found employment, but the program was only repeated once and was never able to secure stable funding.

Ongoing program measurement and evaluation

Organizations that perform well are constantly improving. They improve through innovation and learning, which includes monitoring, measuring, and evaluating their own work. In addition to promoting success stories of their clients, agencies must also keep track of clients who were not successful and try to understand why the program did not work for them. Funders should support measurement by providing resources to do so, and also by supporting the view that measurement is a tool to promote improvement as opposed to a rationale for reducing funding. Evaluations should be viewed as opportunities for learning on the part of both the program deliverer and the program funder. Viewing assessment as an opportunity for learning helps ensure that agencies do not become risk-averse.

At the same time, it must be recognized that it is much easier to measure the success of a program in terms of employment gained as opposed to the development of soft skills. One means of assessing the development of soft skills might be to track how long a person keeps a job and whether he or she is promoted within the same firm or moves on to better employment elsewhere.

One aspect of program development and evaluation should be input from the youth. Programs that give ownership to the youth are more successful at motivating them than are programs with a more top-down orientation. In Hamilton's Tri-Rock program for street-involved youth, engaging participants in program development was a challenging but successful process. Many participants even stayed on as mentors after they had completed the program (Fraser 2004: 15-16).

3.4 Features of Hamilton

The final topic of discussion in the roundtable discussions and interviews focused on distinctive features of Hamilton that were either assets or liabilities in terms of creating employment programs for youth.

Service providers immediately pointed to the existence of the Employment Assistance Resource Network (EARN). EARN is a long-established network of Hamilton area career, employment and training professionals and service providers that meets monthly to provide updates on the programs and services they are delivering. According to the EARN website, its members represent 65 community organizations and resources. This network was viewed as a very positive feature in Hamilton in that it helps various organizations maintain close working relationships and keeps service providers talking to each other.

In addition, Hamilton has a Youth Employment Network (YEN) which is not formally connected to EARN but represents a similar cross-section of individuals and organizations that have a particular focus on youth employment. YEN strives to function like an action-oriented roundtable on various issues pertaining to youth employment. YEN's five principles of youth employment strategy are listed in Appendix D.

In brief, Hamilton is seen as well-networked compared to many other cities. Word gets around quickly about any new employment programs offered to youth.

Particular challenges facing programs in Hamilton are the city's high poverty rates, substantial high school dropout rates, and a significant population of youth at risk. Thus, the population that could benefit from quality youth employment programming is a large one.

Considering these same sets of challenges, the recently-formed Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction has adopted as its focus “Making Hamilton the Best Place to Raise a Child.” The change framework adopted by the Roundtable includes reference to youth as well as children and notes several “critical points of investment” along the continuum from birth through young adulthood, including skills development and employment. The focus of the Roundtable thus lends credence to the efforts to address pre-employment and employment needs of Hamilton’s youth at risk.

● 3.5 Comparison to Other Hamilton Research Findings

The above findings echo some of the findings of earlier studies of youth and employment in Hamilton. In June 2003, the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton conducted some background research in preparation for the first Hamilton Youth Employment Summit. Surveys, focus groups, and two community forums identified several needs: (1) better access to information on local employment programs and services, (2) more opportunities for youth to have work experience, (3) more opportunities for pre-employment and life skills training offered through schools, and (4) more collaboration between schools, local employers, employment service providers and government (Fraser and Gazzola 2003).

A needs assessment of street-involved and homeless youth in Hamilton found several gaps in Hamilton for helping this population, including the lack of transitional/support housing, street-outreach, mental health services, substance use and misuse services, and barriers to diverse youth (Vengris 2005). Of direct relevant to the present report was the noted lack of mentoring, counselling and emotional support available to these youth at risk. Recommendations called for the creation of multi-stakeholder initiatives and holistic supports around education and employment, including “adequate and consistent funding of pre-employment programs to ensure continuity and availability” (Vengris 2005: 35).



4.0 Employment Programming for Youth at Risk: “Best Practices” Findings outside Canada



Primary research for this project identified a range of ideal components of employment programming targeted at youth at risk. It is interesting to note that many, if not most, of these same components have been identified as important in large-scale American research projects and policy initiatives. Some of these “best practices” are described below.

First, extensive research done by the American Youth Policy Forum (AYPF) reiterates many of the ideal programming components articulated by Hamilton service providers. AYPF identified more than 100 employment preparation programs that had independently-documented evidence of effectiveness in youth programming, particularly for low-income youth. Through its evaluation of those programs, AYPF identified the following common principles that contributed to their success: Implementation quality, Caring, knowledgeable adults, High standards and expectations, Importance of community, A holistic approach, Youth as resources/community service and service-learning, Work-based learning, and Long-term services/support and follow-up. (These are listed in more detail in Figure 1.) Although every effective program did not reflect all of these principles, invariably the best programs were those that incorporated all or most of these principles, not just a few (Partee 2003; James and Jurich 1999)

Second, confirmation of the importance of adult mentoring, community involvement, work placements, and long-term follow-up can be found in provisions of the U.S. Workforce Investment Act of 1998, which established a national workforce preparation and employment system and was also based on extensive research. The Act contains specific requirements for youth programs that reflect much of what has been learned about key ingredients for success. Under the terms of the Act, youth programs are required to have the following components:

- long-term (12 months at least) adult mentoring
- the involvement of “parents, participants, and other members of the community with experience relating to programs for youth” in the design and implementation of youth programs
- “opportunities for eligible youth in activities related to leadership, development, decision-making, citizenship, and community service”
- “strong linkages between academic and vocational learning ... paid and unpaid work experiences”
- long-term follow-up services (no less than 12 months)

Third, starting from the premise that programs focusing only on job training and placements often failed to meet the complex needs of inner-city neighbourhoods with high unemployment rates, in 1995 the Annie E. Casey Foundation launched the *Jobs Initiative*, an eight-year \$30 million commitment that entailed program sites in six American cities. One by-product of this initiative was the identification of four “lessons learned.” These were:

- **Employer engagement.** Employers must be engaged in workforce development at the beginning of the process and viewed as collaborators in that process.
- **Employee retention and advancement.** Efforts to increase worker retention in the labour market are as important as job placement and must be targeted toward employers and employees alike.
- **Collaboration.** Linking low-income residents with family-supporting jobs that offer career advancement ultimately requires broad systemic change and buy-in among all affected stakeholders – low-income workers, employers, elected officials, community-based organizations, government agencies, and others.
- **Building organizational capacity.** Community-based organizations must be provided with adequate financial support, technical assistance, networking opportunities, and other resources that enable them to design more effective, accountable, and outcomes-oriented programs (Annie E. Casey Foundation 2000).

Fourth, there is strong agreement in virtually all research that the presence of a caring and committed adults can make a strong difference in young peoples’ lives. Public/Private Ventures (PPV) is a non-profit organization that seeks to improve the effectiveness of social policies and programs. Looking beyond employment-focused programs, PPV’s research has presented a case for paid support for mentors and counsellors, arguing that other approaches simply have not worked and that this approach ultimately saves money because significantly less public money will have to be spent on incarceration (Smith 2004; see also Bauldry and Hartmann 2004).

Figure 1. Research on Best Practices for Youth Employment Programs

- **Implementation quality** – factors contributing to successful implementation include ample start-up time; clear communication of goals; sufficient, timely and sustain resources; strong leadership from the federal, state or local levels; professional staff development; and use of data to improve performance.
- **Caring, knowledgeable adults** – can be teachers, counselors, mentors, case workers, community members, program directors or other trained individuals who understand and deeply care about youth, provide young people with significant time and attention, and demonstrate that they are committed to the success of youth “for the long haul.” They must be knowledgeable and, therefore, should receive extensive training in working effectively and compassionately with young people and in providing age-appropriate activities that follow sound youth development principles.
- **High standards and expectations** – successful programs do not water down their standards, but maintain high standards of performance for youth people and offer supports so that they can meet these standards.
- **Importance of community** – effective programs find ways to integrate and use community members (parents, guardians, employers) as resources (e.g., to support planning, extend and enrich curricula, provide additional cadres of caring adults and as a natural base of advocacy for the young people and their program).
- **A holistic approach** – including a broad set of strategies and services to address varying needs of young people (e.g., extended hours, individualized attention, hands-on instruction, enrichment activities, culturally-sensitive activities, child care and transportation, life skills and assertiveness training, recognition/rewards, a focus on peer support).
- **Youth as resources/community service and service-learning** – opportunities for young people to contribute to their communities in positive ways, while also using community work as context for helping youth develop and apply critical skills that are important in the workplace and in life generally.
- **Work-based learning** – adding “authenticity” and “relevance” to the learning experience and ensuring that skills learned are likely to lead to employment.
- **Long-term services/support and follow-up** – of six months to several years, providing opportunities for young people to continue relationships with caring, knowledgeable adults and bridge the critical early months of employment.

Quoted from Partee, G. 2003. *Preparing Youth for Employment: Principles and Characteristics of Five Leading United States Youth Development Programs*, American Youth Policy Forum, pp. 2-3. These are explained in more detail in: James, D. (ed) with S. Jurich. 1999. *MORE Things That DO Make a Difference for Youth: A Compendium of Evaluations of Youth Programs and Practices, Volume II*. American Youth Policy Forum. Both reports are available on the AYPF website: <http://www.aypf.org>

5.0 Questions for Reflection prior to Program Selection



- 1 Would you like to see a project that reaches more youth or gives fewer youth more intensive support and training?
- 2 Would it be better to design a unique program suited to the needs identified in this report or to purchase an existing program that has been tested in the field?
- 3 How will you reach out to employers? How will you entice them to support a youth employment program?
- 4 How will program planners integrate and use other stakeholders, including community members and educational institutions, as resources for the program?
- 5 If a mentorship program is pursued, how would mentors be recruited? What would entice them to participate in this program?
- 6 Are there ways that youth can be incorporated into program planning and implementation?
- 7 How will success be measured?



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A Appendix

EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS FOR YOUTH IN HAMILTON, ONTARIO

compiled July 2006



EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS FOR YOUTH ONLY

 **Adolescent Community Care Program**

Life skills to improve the quality of their lives and find employment. Through various programs, and with numerous residential and non-residential services, they successfully interpret the needs of youth and offer tailored social services towards the needs of each individual.

LOCATION: Central

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: 15-30, youth with emotional and developmental difficulties

FUNDING: Community Adolescent Network of Hamilton

MORE INFO: 905-529-6866

 **Ancaster Community Services**

Register students and search for jobs to fit their profile.

LOCATION: Ancaster

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: Student

FUNDING: Service Canada

MORE INFO: 905-648-6675

 **Career Cruiser (YMCA)**

Mobile employment resource centre

LOCATION: Varies

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: 15-30

FUNDING: HRSDC

MORE INFO: 905-540-9679

 **Careerapalooza**

Annual career fair, featuring interactive career management and assessment tools

LOCATION: Central

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: Targeted at students and youth aged 12-29

FUNDING: Service Canada

MORE INFO: Industry-Education Council of Hamilton

 **Careerworx (YMCA)**

Career and employment resources centre. One-time workshops offered weekly

LOCATION: Central

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: 15-30

FUNDING: Service Canada

MORE INFO: 905-540-WORX (9679)

Choices Association Incorporated – Westfield

Life skills training for developmentally disabled and developmentally handicapped adults.

LOCATION: Dundas

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: 15-30

FUNDING: Trillium Foundation

MORE INFO: 905-628-6147

Connexion Emploï

Summer employment service

LOCATION: Central

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: For francophone youth

FUNDING: Government of Ontario

MORE INFO: 905-540-1300 ext.22

Dundas Community Services

Summer employment service that links student employees with prospective employers.

LOCATION: Dundas

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: 14-19

FUNDING: Service Canada

MORE INFO: 905-627-5461

www.dundascommunityservice.on.ca

Grand River Employment & Training (G.R.E.A.T.) – Hamilton Regional Indian Centre

Pre-employment, on-the-job, and apprenticeship training programs

LOCATION: Central

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: 15-30, requires Native status

FUNDING: in partnership with the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres – Grand River Employment and Training Initiative (O-GI)

MORE INFO:

1-888-218-8230 www.hric-hamilton.com/

Hamilton Youth Employment Centre/Yootworks (Citizens Action Group)

One-on-one employment counselling, referral to employers, apprenticeship information, resume help, an online resource room

Provides JobConnect, Sole support parent program

LOCATION: Central

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: 15-24 (up to 29 for persons with disabilities), out of school, and unemployed

FUNDING: Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (JobConnect)

MORE INFO: www.yootworks.info

Job Connect

Resource Centre, Employment Planning and Preparation (assessment, guidance, individual and group learning), Job Development and Placement Services: Hands-on activities and practical work experience

LOCATION: Central

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: 16-24. Resource centre open to all ages.

FUNDING: Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities

MORE INFO: 905-575-2177

www.mohawkcollege.ca/Discover_Mohawk/ccts/jobConnect.html

● Service Canada Centre for Youth (SCCY)

Resource centre

LOCATION: Central
ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: students
FUNDING: Service Canada
MORE INFO: www.youth.gc.ca

● Threshold School of Building

8-week pre-employment program covering life skills and practical house-building instruction

LOCATION: Central
ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: 15-30
FUNDING: Trillium Foundation, Hamilton Community Foundation, Ontario Works
MORE INFO: 905-522-8686
www.thresholdschool.ca

● Transitional Youth Outreach @ Wesley Urban Ministries

One-on-one resume writing and rudimentary job search assistance for street-involved and homeless youth, offered as part of overall outreach program

LOCATION: Central
ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: 16-21
FUNDING: Combination of municipal, provincial and federal funding, including Supporting Community Partnerships
MORE INFO: 905-522-0863

● TRI - Rock

10 weeks of life skills training, group work, employment soft skills training and counselling, followed by 20-week work placement

LOCATION: Central
ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: 16-25
FUNDING: Service Canada
MORE INFO: www.thelivingrock.ca

● Youth Employment Services @ Flamborough Information and Community Services

Summer employment service for students, including HRSDC Internet resources plus resume writing and interview skills instruction

LOCATION: Flamborough
ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: Student
FUNDING: Service Canada
MORE INFO: 905-689-7880
fics@infoflam.on.ca

● Federal Public Sector Youth Internship Program

6-9 month internship in federal agency located in Hamilton. Interns receive a stipend from the program, not from the employer. Participants who have not completed grade 12 begin with a 4-week employability workshop

LOCATION: Central
ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: 16-30, unemployed
FUNDING: Service Canada
MORE INFO: 905-317-4934

Youth Skills Link Program (Fletcher and Associates)

Training program for working in health care field, including Personal development, Stress management and confidence building, Experience working with the sick, disabled or elderly through area health care agencies, Job search and interview skills. Allowance while attending

LOCATION: Central

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: 30 or under, unemployed

FUNDING: Service Canada

MORE INFO: 905-526-0807

Youth in Transition (YIT) @ YMCA Hamilton-Burlington

Six-month job placement and wage-subsidy program, providing employers with \$5/hr wage subsidy up to 26 weeks. Counsellor works with participants to develop employment skills and find a placement.

LOCATION: Central

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: unemployed or underemployed youth, 16-30

FUNDING: HRSDC

MORE INFO: 905-317-4934

Youth Track Program

This program offers individual employment counselling, referrals to training, upgrading, OW volunteer positions and employment. Participants attend a 3 week half day program on job search and life skills plus 12 weeks follow up. Access to Child Minding on site.

LOCATION: Central

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: 15-30, Must be on Ontario Works

FUNDING: Ontario government and municipality

MORE INFO: www.city.hamilton.on.ca/Ontario-works-jobs-hamilton

EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS OPEN TO YOUTH AND OTHERS

Diskovery® Job Skills Training Program

Group training in classroom setting for these fields: customer service, Office Administration Certificate Training, Office Administration Specialty Certificate, Training on Adaptive Technology, Customer Service, Workplace Communication

LOCATION: Central

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: No

FUNDING: Service Canada
ODSP, WSIB, CPP

MORE INFO: 905-528-8060

www.dimes.on.ca/programs/emp_diskovery.asp?sect=employment

Employment Now (Marafon Consulting)

12 week program offering classroom instruction, guided job search, and pre-employment co-op experience with an employer chosen by the participant.

LOCATION: Central

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: out of school, unemployed
FUNDING: funded in part by the Government of Canada,

MORE INFO: www.employmentnow.ca/index.htm

Future Directions - Mohawk College

5 week program assists clients to determine their level of literacy and numeracy skills in preparation for future job opportunities.

LOCATION: Mountain

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: Ontario Works

FUNDING: Government of Ontario

MORE INFO: 905-575-1212 ext 2290

Food Services Training Program @ Marty Karl Centre

22-week course for working in a commercial kitchen.

LOCATION: Central

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: 16-65, Ontario Works, ODSP

FUNDING: ODSP, OW, EI and private donations

MORE INFO: 905-522-5542

Assistant Cook Apprenticeship @Marty Karl Centre

Part-time evening program for those already employed in food services sector, accredited by MTCU

LOCATION: Central

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: 16-65, Ontario Works, ODSP Must have grade 10 equivalent

FUNDING: ODSP, OW, EI and private donations

MORE INFO: 905-522-5542

Goodwill Workforce Development

Wide variety of individual and group pre-employment assessment, goal-setting, and counselling, including Situational Assessment Program in on-site work areas, Health and Safety Program, Computer Skills Training Program, Customer Service Skills Training Program, Job Development/Coaching, and Job Maintenance. Some aimed at persons with mental illness, past difficulties maintaining employment, traumatic injury, or needing literacy assistance.

LOCATION: Central

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: Must be at least 16

FUNDING: Service Canada, ODSP
Fee for service

MORE INFO: www.amity.on.ca

Hamilton Public Library Career & Employment Resource Centres

Resource centres staffed with coordinators who offer individualized assistance

LOCATION: Central (Barton Branch), Dundas, East (Red Hill Branch), Mountain (Sherwood and Terryberry Branches)

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: None

FUNDING: City of Hamilton

MORE INFO:

<http://www.myhamilton.ca/myhamilton/LibraryServices/servicesfor/jobseekers>

● Janitorial training services @ Marty Karl Centre

11 weeks in-class training, 7 weeks unpaid placement in the community and a 4week of job placement, working with an employment counsellor.

LOCATION: Central

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: 16-65, OW, ODSP, E.I. or W.S.I.B.

FUNDING: OW, ODSP, EI, and private donations

MORE INFO: 905-522-5542

● Job Placement Services / Supported Employment Services (March of Dimes)

Assessment services; 4-week (3 hour/day) job Search workshop; 1 to 5 day job trials; 6-week+ unpaid Work Experience to build skills and obtain a reference; Job Coaching also available for paid and unpaid trainees.

LOCATION: Central

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: None

FUNDING: Government of Canada

MORE INFO: 905-522-2253 / 1-866-244-3463

● PATH Employment Services

Pre-employment services, Guidance and Referral Services, and one-on-one support

LOCATION: Central

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: All ages of persons with disabilities

FUNDING: Service Canada

MORE INFO: 905-528-6611

www.pathemployment.com

● Personal Support Worker @ St. Charles

4-month training program to provide students with the skills required to care for people in their homes

LOCATION: Central

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: Must be at least 18

FUNDING: Ministry of Education

MORE INFO: www.stcharles.ca

● Targeted Placement Services – Mohawk College

To assist unemployed individuals with workforce re-entry through the Targeted wage subsidy program.

LOCATION: Mountain

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: Unemployed, receiving E.I. or H.R.I.S.

FUNDING: Service Canada

MORE INFO: 905-575-8910

www.mohawkcollege.ca/Discover_Mohawk/CCTS/tps.html

● Settlement and Integration Services Organization - Orientation to Employment

1 day Career Exploration and job search Workshop for newcomers to Canada

LOCATION: Central

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: Must be at least 18 and an immigrant or refugee with limited literacy and/or limited English proficiency

FUNDING: Citizenship and Immigration Canada

MORE INFO: www.siso-ham.org/index.html

● Women's Centre - Pre-employment Workshops

Programs and workshops geared towards re-entering the workforce, job hunting, and assertiveness training. Counselling services available.

LOCATION: Central

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: Females only, all ages

FUNDING: Ontario Women's Directorate

MORE INFO: 905-522-0127

● WorkPath – John Howard Society

Individual counselling, 14 group workshops, and a resource area. Focus on three areas of the employability continuum: Career Decision Making, Job Search, and Job Maintenance.

LOCATION: Central

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: All ages, unemployed

FUNDING: Service Canada

MORE INFO: 905-522-4446 ext 221



Appendix

EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS FOR YOUTH AT RISK IN OTHER JURISDICTIONS



PROGRAM - BladeRunners

OBJECTIVES:

Provide youth with meaningful work experiences that result in long-term attachment to the work force.

Provide youth with trades training, self-esteem, and life skills needed for successful employment and apprenticeship in the construction industry.

DESCRIPTION:

Assists at-risk, disadvantaged youth (aged 19 to 30) in gaining on the job construction training and apprenticeships in British Columbia.

Youth complete a 6-week pre-employment program, receive basic training (e.g. in health and safety), and then work on construction sites.

Youth receive continued support from program coordinators and informal mentorships.

SUCCESS FACTORS:

80% success rate (employed or returning to school) due to:

1. Experienced coordinators who act as mentors, job coaches, and mediators.
2. Several active partners – i.e. government, funders, community-based program deliverer, unions, and employers.
3. Effective combination of youth preparation, development, and early engagement in hands-on, paid work.

FUNDING:

Funders:

- ACCESS (Aboriginal Community Career and

Employment Services Society) contributes \$240,000

- Provincial government contributes \$300,000
- Human Resources and Skills Development Canada is also a funding partner
- Trades firms, construction companies, and developers waive the training allowance fee (\$3/hour) previously paid by government

ADMINISTERED BY:

ACCESS is a non-profit organization that provides human resource development services to urban aboriginals.

MORE INFO:

Darcy Casteneda
Provincial Coordinator

Bladerunners
56 West Hastings St.,
Vancouver, BC V6G 1B4
604-688-9116

bladerunners@buildingfuturestoday.com
[www.buildingfuturestoday.com/
programs.php?page=6](http://www.buildingfuturestoday.com/programs.php?page=6)

OR

Tara Gilbert, C.E.O

ACCESS
Suite 108 - 100 Park Royal South
West Vancouver, BC V7T 1A2
604-913-7933

**PROGRAM -
Eva's Phoenix**

OBJECTIVES:

Assist youth to develop life skills, build careers, and live independently.

DESCRIPTION:

A transitional housing and training facility for homeless and at-risk youth (aged 16 to 29) in Toronto.

Works with business, unions, and community partners in order to provide employment training and pre-apprenticeship programs.

Employment areas include: construction, commercial printing, network administration, web design, film, cooking, pet-grooming, hairstyling, child and youth work, and fundraising.

SUCCESS FACTORS:

1. Longer-term housing allows for extended support.
2. Integrated model (housing, employment, mentorship and related services) addresses range of youth needs.
3. Partnerships with employers ensure effective work placements and contacts for future employment.
4. A high performance, mission-focused organization.
5. Effective staff who are always striving for innovation and improvement.

6. Strong community partnerships.

7. Very effective fundraising.

FUNDING:

Budget of \$3 million.

Funders:

- The Toronto Enterprise Fund of the United Way of Greater Toronto
- Human Resources and Skills Development Canada has also provided funding in the past

ADMINISTERED BY:

Eva's Initiatives Administration Office

MORE INFO:

11 Ordnance St.
Toronto, ON M6K 1A1
416-364-4716

info@evas.ca
www.evasinitiatives.com/e-phoenix.htm



**PROGRAM -
Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ)**

OBJECTIVES:

To provide early and progressive intervention in children's and youth development, using a mix of effective services.

To develop a critical mass of adults who are well versed in the techniques of effective parenting, and are engaged in local educational, social, and religious activities with their children.

DESCRIPTION:

Targets at-risk youth in marginalized neighbourhoods in New York City.

Employment and Technology Center offers a job readiness- training program for youth (aged 14 to 18) who are attending school and provides free use of computers and participation in computer-training classes to neighborhood residents.

Parents Help Center is a drop-out prevention program.

TRUCE is a leadership program for adolescents that promotes academic growth and career readiness using the arts, media literacy, health and multimedia technology.

SUCCESS FACTORS:

1. offers a range of services, yet programs are tightly targeted to create a critical mass effect.
2. By being geographically focused, HCZ can undertake targeted outreach and follow-up.
3. Engages in extensive monitoring and evaluation, allowing it to ensure that its interventions are working and to demonstrate its effectiveness to funders.
4. Deliberately recruited Wall Street financiers and C.E.O.s to its board, greatly enhancing its fundraising capacity, its performance-driven practices, and its business plan.

FUNDING:

Budget of US \$16 million.

Funders:

- Private Foundations
- Corporations
- Individual donors
- Government

ADMINISTERED BY:

Harlem Children's Zone Inc.

MORE INFO:

Geoffrey Canada
President/CEO

Harlem Children's Zone
35 East 125th St.
New York, NY 10035
212-534-0700

mlipp@harlemchildrenszone.org
www.hcz.org

**PROGRAM -
Pathways to Education**

OBJECTIVES:

To reduce poverty and its effects by supporting the development of youth from economically disadvantaged communities and promoting their individual health and the health of the community by addressing the two principal social determinants of health: education and income.

To break the cycle of poverty and unemployment in Regent Park by getting kids to high school, keeping kids in high school and inspiring them to move on to post-secondary programs.

To help low-income communities across the country use the power of education to expand opportunities for their children.

DESCRIPTION:

Targets high school youth in Regent Park in order to provide them with:

- Tutoring
- Group mentoring and career mentoring
- Financial support, in the form of public transportation assistance and a \$4,000 bursary to be used towards post secondary school
- Student Parent Support Workers who act as a bridge between the community, parents, students, schools and the program.

SUCCESS FACTORS:

1. Program is targeted in its geography and focused in its objectives.
2. Community mobilization effort seeks to reach all youth in the target area, as well as their parents and teachers.
3. Partnerships that involve elementary and secondary schools, school board staff and supportive universities.
4. Effective use of mentors for the youth.
5. Effective fundraising.

6. Rigorous monitoring, regular evaluation, and cross-communication.

FUNDING:

\$2.5 million in funding in 2004/2005.

Funders:

- Private Foundations
- Corporations
- Individual donors
- The Ontario Trillium Foundation
- The Toronto Community Foundation
- CAW-TCA Social Justice Fund

ADMINISTERED BY:

Regent Park Community Health Centre.

MORE INFO:

Norman Rowen
Program Director

Regent Park Community Health Centre
411 Parliament Street, 2nd Floor
Toronto, ON M5A 3A1
416-642-1570 ext.225

normanr@regentparkchc.org
<http://pathwaystoeducation.ca/>

**PROGRAM -
ReThinking Unemployment (RTUE)**

OBJECTIVES:

To teach cognitive skills to develop social and employment competency.

Focuses on long-term clients with chronic unemployment problems

DESCRIPTION:

8 weeks of cognitive skills training in small groups, inc. job trials.

Job developers assist clients in understanding labour market and creating networks to obtain jobs.

SUCCESS FACTORS:

In Nova Scotia, 97% of clients were working within a year.

1. innovative focus on cognitive skills

FUNDING:

JobConnect

Pilots were carried out in 7 Ontario locations; average age of client was 24

ADMINISTERED BY:

Program was developed by JobConnect and is offered free of charge to JobConnect only, plus staff training (\$3-5,000 per person) by a private firm.

MORE INFO:

<http://www.employmentoutcomes.com/articles.htm>



**PROGRAM -
SKETCH: Working Arts Studio for
Street-involved and Homeless
Youth**

OBJECTIVES:

To enhance the quality of life of homeless or street-involved young people by offering art-making tools, a safe space to express and explore, and opportunities to creatively engage in community life.

DESCRIPTION:

A non-profit arts studio in Toronto which provides job and life skills training to homeless and street involved youth (aged 15 to 29).

Uses the arts as a vehicle to restore self-worth, build resilience, and develop skills among young people.

Programs:

- A Self-Employment Project
- Skill Building Workshops in printmaking and bookbinding
- Mentoring and Apprenticeship Programs that provide tangible employment experience

SUCCESS FACTORS:

1. Only program of its kind in Canada.
2. Attracts youth by focusing on something which appeals to them and then uses the relationship that develops to reach the youth on other issues.
3. Provides an opportunity for youth to spend a day "in peace," away from the stress of the street, engaged in art.
4. Program framework addresses youth at different levels and helps them to move through a continuum of housing, health, school, and employment.

FUNDING:

Annual budget of \$610,000.

Funders:

- The Toronto Enterprise Fund
- Private Foundations
- Toronto Arts Council
- City Drug Prevention Grants
- Federal National Crime Prevention grant
- Corporations
- The Toronto Community Foundation

ADMINISTERED BY:

SKETCH has its own management and administration team.

MORE INFO:

Phyllis Novak
Artistic Director and Founder

Location:
580 King St. W., 2nd Floor
Toronto, ON

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 63, Station B
119 Spadina Ave
Toronto, ON M5T 2T2

Program: 416-516-5428
Administration: 416-516-1559
info@sketch.ca
www.sketch.ca

**PROGRAM -
STRIVE (Support Training Results
in Valuable Employment)**

OBJECTIVES:

To provide "high risk" inner-city adults age 18 to 30 with tools to enter the job market and remain employed.

DESCRIPTION:

Intake and assessment: focuses on attitudinal development. 4-week training focusing on individual ownership of skills and attitudes. 2-year post-employment follow-up

SUCCESS FACTORS:

1. Long-term follow-up by staff
2. Focus on motivation and attitude well-received by Employers
3. Many staff were one-time STRIVE participants
4. 80% of participants find long-term employment.

FUNDING:

Mostly funded by private foundations, some funding from United Way and government

ADMINISTERED BY:

STRIVE staff

MORE INFO:

240 E. 123rd St.
3rd floor
New York, NY 10035-2038
212-360-1100

info@STRIVENewYork.org
www.strivenewyork.org

**PROGRAM -
Watch yOUR Step II (2005)**

OBJECTIVES:

To enable youth to learn transferable skills and gain experience that leads to employment.

To foster creative and collaborative processes, develop leadership skills

To foster positive connections between street-involved youth and others

DESCRIPTION:

Youth-centred community public art project that focuses on skill development and capacity building.

1. Core Youth Team: 24 weeks of intensive training/employment for 6 youth.
2. Drop In Workshops: 28 workshops for more than 60 youth
3. Up to 20 days employment for up to 6 youth/day

SUCCESS FACTORS:

Built on 2002 pilot with slight modifications

Combines mentoring, hands-on experience, creative expression, and community interaction.

Pays an honourarium

FUNDING:

City of Vancouver Community Public Art Program, Vancouver Parks Board Neighbourhood Matching Funds

ADMINISTERED BY:

Gathering Place Community Centre, Roundhouse Community Centre, Vancouver Downtown Integrated Youth Services

MORE INFO:

Leah Decter
Artistic/Project Director

1310 William St.
Vancouver BC V5L 2P5
604-255-3549
ldecter@axion.net

**PROGRAM -
YouthBuild**

OBJECTIVES:

To develop leaders, foster community service and create a positive mini-community of adults and youth committed to success.

DESCRIPTION:

A US program that helps unemployed and undereducated youth (aged 16 to 24) work toward their high school diploma while also learning construction skills.

The program is aimed especially towards very low-income high school dropouts.

Participants are divided into two “crews”, building affordable housing for low-income people for half the time and attending academic classes for the other half.

SUCCESS FACTORS:

1. Holistic approach of education, youth development and workforce development.
2. Program sets high expectations and high standards.
3. Staff seek to create a caring and supportive family-like environment.
4. High quality instructors and staff.
5. Construction work produces tangible results, which is valued by participants.
6. The YouthBuild approach is regularly replicated in communities across the US as well as other countries.

FUNDING:

The US government allocated US \$60 million in 2003.

ADMINISTERED BY:

A national organization supports a nationwide network of 200 local YouthBuild programs.

MORE INFO:

YouthBuild USA
58 Day Street
Somerville, MA 02144
617-623-9900

info@youthbuild.org
<http://www.youthbuild.org>

2003 evaluation:
<http://www.huduser.org/Publications/PDF/YouthBuild.pdf>

**PROGRAM -
Youth ONE Campaign**

OBJECTIVES:

To create 1,000 jobs, apprenticeships, or training bursaries for young people in 13 Toronto priority neighbourhoods

DESCRIPTION:

City staff match employers to pre-screened youth who have necessary pre-employment skills

SUCCESS FACTORS:

Launched March 29, 2006.

NOTE: This is not a program per se, just a matching service.

FUNDING:

Toronto Board of Trade and various private sector

ADMINISTERED BY:

City of Toronto

MORE INFO:

www.bot.com
City of Toronto
Employer Hotline
416-397-JOBS (5627).



C Appendix

List of Participating Individuals and Organizations

Victoria Hewitson, Goodwill
Kim Posavad, Goodwill
Brad Spencer, Path Employment Services
Linda Scumacher, Job Connect-Mohawk College
Bart Kawula, Community Centre For Media Arts/MonkeyBiz
Michelle Sayles, Career Development Center - Dundas Library Milka Sabocan, Career Development Center - Red Hill Library
Sharon Bore, Centre d'emploi 2000 – Connexion Emploi
Christine Boucher, Job Connect-Mohawk College
Lily Lumsden, YMCA-Career Development and Learning
Linda Oligmueller, City of Hamilton-Youth Track
Theresa Morley, City of Hamilton-Youth Track
Jane Letourneau, Workpath - John Howard Society
Jennifer deVries, Tri-Rock Program, Living Rock Ministries
Beth Gibson, Threshold School of Building
Michael Poworoznyk, Mission Services and Outgoing Chair, Youth Employment Network
Bev Penrose, Service Canada
Drew Nunn, Service Canada

Other Interviews

Mark Gifford, Program Director, Vancouver Foundation
Tom Zyzis, Consultant with expertise in youth development (Toronto)

Appendix

Principles of the Hamilton Youth Employment Strategy

1. Access to Information. Every young person needs access to better information on local employment services and programs available to them.
2. Opportunities for Work Experience. Every young person needs access to opportunities for work experience.
3. Connect Schools to Employment Programs. Every school needs to connect and partner effectively with community employment programs and services.
4. Engage Employers. The community must engage employers as full partners in overcoming the barriers to employment that young people face.
5. Employment Readiness. There must be a collaboration between all stakeholders to provide employment readiness training to our young people.



Appendix

Recommended Web resources

Service Canada Youth website,
www.youth.gc.ca

Essential Skills, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada
http://srv600.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/esrp/english/general/home_e.shtml

Joseph Roundtree Foundation (UK) – one of UK’s largest foundations concerned with social policy research and development,
<http://www.jrf.org.uk/>

Laidlaw Foundation(Canada) – youth engagement is one of four program areas,
<http://www.laidlawfdn.org>

Resources from the US

American Youth Policy Forum–very extensive and useful resources on a range of topics related to youth,
<http://www.aypf.org/>

Committee for Children, Seattle WA–excellent information on bullying and youth violence prevention,
<http://www.cfchildren.org/>

The Annie E. Casey Foundation -publications pertaining to vulnerable children and families, including around economic development and employment,
<http://www.aecf.org/>

MDRC– dedicated to learning what works to improve the well-being of low-income people, www.mdrc.org
Kauffman Foundation–works with partners to encourage entrepreneurship across America and improve the education of children and youth,
<http://www.emkf.org/>

Public/Private Ventures – works to improve the effectiveness of social policies, programs and community initiatives, especially as they affect youth and young adults, has a particular focus on labour market issues –
<http://www.ppv.org>

The Finance Project –Economic Success Clearinghouse (formerly Welfare Information Network) contains documents on pre-employment programs for youth,
<http://www.financeproject.org/>

Hamilton Training Advisory Board

Business, Labour & Community: Partners in Workforce Development

Established in 1997, the Hamilton Training Advisory Board is one of twenty-one Local Boards in Ontario. HTAB is a not-for-profit organization that draws on the expertise of a broad cross-section of our community to enable us to better identify and address existing and anticipated labour force needs.

At HTAB, we envision a healthy community where everyone achieves his or her potential. To accomplish this goal we:

- Profile the trends, opportunities, and priorities of Hamilton's labour market
- Identify skills shortages and future training requirements
- Share our research with the community to facilitate labour force planning and training
- Undertake projects and partnerships that address labour force issues

Log on to HTAB's website at www.htab.ca and you will:

Discover our community [Projects and Partners](#) promoting labour force development.

Learn about local labour market trends, opportunities, and priorities in our [Publications](#).

Connect to [Links](#) on training, employment, and labour market information.



Hamilton Training Advisory Board

Commission consultative sur la formation à Hamilton

117 - 77 James Street North
Hamilton, Ontario, L8R 2K3
Telephone: 905-521-5777
Fax: 905-521-9309
Email: info@htab.ca
Website: www.htab.ca

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