

SEPTEMBER 2018

ARE WE MAKING A DIFFERENCE?

Understanding leading practices in youth
volunteerism & service.



UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO

**YOUTH &
INNOVATION PROJECT**

ABOUT THIS REPORT

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Developed for Employment and Social Development Canada with the support of the Government of Canada.

Youth & Innovation Project at the University of Waterloo works to ensure young people, 15 to 25 years old, are meaningfully engaged in finding and implementing solutions to social, environmental and economic problems, and are valued for the contributions they make. We provide business, civil society and government with the strategic and policy insight they need to support intergenerational collaboration.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive summary	4
1.0 Introduction	13
2.0 Methodology	15
3.0 Definitions	19
3.1 Service	19
3.2 Volunteer	20
3.3 Changemaker	22
3.4 Engaged citizen	23
3.5 Positive social and environmental impact	23
4.0 Current context	24
4.1 Healthy youth development	24
4.2 Young people in Canada	27
4.3 Young changemakers & citizens	29
5.0 Young people as changemakers & active citizens	32
5.1 Barriers to engaging young participants	35
5.2 Leading practices in addressing barriers to engaging young participants	39
5.3 Leading practices in engaging youth as changemakers and active citizens	42
6.0 Societal and environmental impact of youth service and volunteerism	48
6.1 Types of societal and environmental impact	49
6.2 Monetary measures of social impact	54
6.3 Leading theories and practices to increase societal and environmental impact	56
7.0 Recommendations & insights	58
8.0 Conclusion	62
9.0 References	63
Photo Credits	71



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This literature review provides a current overview of leading practices in youth volunteerism and youth service in Canada and internationally with the aim of identifying trends and recurring themes, as well as barriers, that should be addressed to increase youth engagement in volunteerism and service. Special attention is given to information on how to engage traditionally underrepresented youth, in particular indigenous youth.

It is the intention that the insight and knowledge gained from this research will help to inform the development of policy options for the next phase of the Canada Service Corps in 2019 – a signature program for youth service – as well as equip organizations working in the youth volunteerism and service sector in Canada with the latest knowledge on how they might engage a more diverse cohort of young people, better support the young people they work with and increase their societal and environmental impact.

The research questions that guided the development of this report are as follows:

- What does it mean for a young person (age 15 to 30) to be: a volunteer, a youth service participant, a changemaker, an engaged citizen and to have positive societal or environmental impact?
- What are leading theories and/or practices in Canada and internationally that result in more young people becoming changemakers & civically engaged?
- What are the barriers to youth engaging in volunteerism and service in Canada?
- What are the leading theories and/or practices in youth service and volunteerism in Canada and internationally that result in positive societal and environmental impact?
- What do we know about the social impact (using monetary measures to measure impact) of youth service and volunteerism?

KEY FINDINGS

YOUNG PEOPLE AS CHANGEMAKERS AND ENGAGED CITIZENS

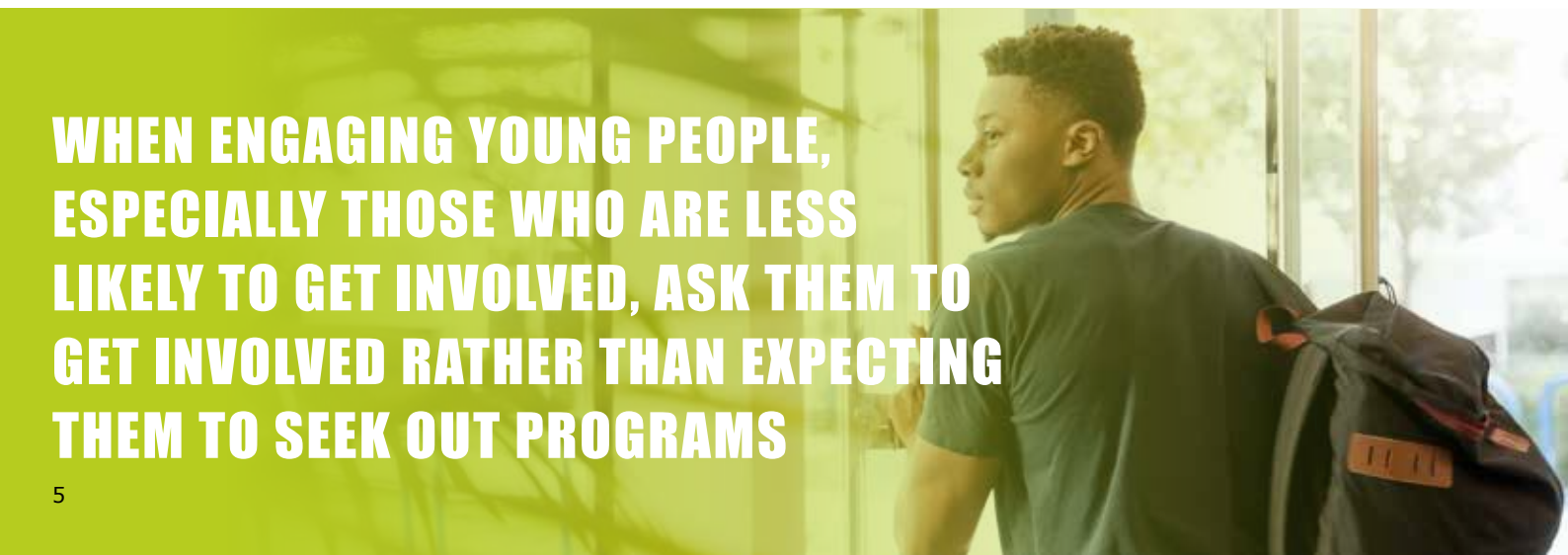
In youth service and volunteerism related grey and academic literature, the lack of standardized evaluations and high quality research that is consistent and methodologically rigorous is repeatedly discussed. Despite this concern, we can draw some conclusions about the impact youth service and volunteerism has on young people's likelihood of staying engaged as changemakers and active citizens.

Barriers to young people not participating in youth service found in the literature are:

- Young people not been asked to participate;
- Structural and financial barriers that young people face;
- Young people encountering ageism, tokenism and civil society organizations failing to meaningfully engage young people perspectives and ideas in the course of volunteer or service programs; and
- For indigenous youth additional barriers include western ideologies of leadership and governance being dominant as a result of colonization, and intergenerational trauma.

Leading practices to address the barriers young people face in participating in youth service and volunteerism found in the literature are:

- When engaging young people, especially those who are less likely to get involved, ask them to get involved rather than expecting them to seek out programs;
- Provide financial or educational incentives to facilitate participation of underrepresented and disengaged young people;
- Address structural barriers by being flexible, offering high touch personalized approaches and ensuring a variety of programs and structures are offered; and
- Address structural barriers by coordinating support between youth service programs and other institutions and organizations that are working with the same young people both while young people are participating in youth service and volunteerism and afterward.

A photograph of a young man with short, dark hair, wearing a dark t-shirt and a backpack, looking out a window. The image is overlaid with a green gradient and white text.

**WHEN ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE,
ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO ARE LESS
LIKELY TO GET INVOLVED, ASK THEM TO
GET INVOLVED RATHER THAN EXPECTING
THEM TO SEEK OUT PROGRAMS**



ENSURE RESPECTFUL INTERGENERATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS AND MENTORSHIP ARE PRIORITIZED DURING A VOLUNTEER OR SERVICE EXPERIENCE

Leading practices in ensuring youth service programs lead to young people engaging as changemakers and citizens found in the literature are:

- Connecting volunteer or service projects to young people's interests;
- Ensuring the work young people do meets real needs and that young people are given the opportunity to take meaningful action during a volunteer or service experience;
- Ensuring strong community partnerships and engagement, and that young people connect with decision-makers during a volunteer or service experience;
- Ensuring respectful intergenerational partnerships and mentorship are prioritized during a volunteer or service experience;
- Ensuring young people are meaningfully engaged in leadership and decision-making throughout their volunteer or service experience; and
- Ensuring that youth service and volunteerism programs integrate time for reflection and that these conversations are linked to systemic issues and long-term action.

SOCIETAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

When it comes to understanding whether or not young service and volunteerism programs lead to positive societal and environmental impacts, concerns about the failure of program evaluation and research to measure societal and environmental outcomes is discussed in the literature. In particular, researchers and evaluators tend to focus on the skills or training a young person receives through an activity or program rather than the impact these programs have on the communities and organizations they are embedded within, as well as society and the environment more broadly.

The impact of youth service and volunteerism that is most frequently evaluated is the impact on young participants themselves, which can be considered a societal impact. Participation in youth service and volunteerism are linked to positive outcomes including improvements in mortality rates, mental health, well-being and physical health, less delinquency, improved academic performance, personal growth, building self-esteem, building social capital, building social trust, developing leadership skills and developing work skills. However, results vary significantly between different programs and the inconsistent nature of how results are measured makes it

difficult to come to conclusions about the benefits young participants derive from participating in youth service writ large.

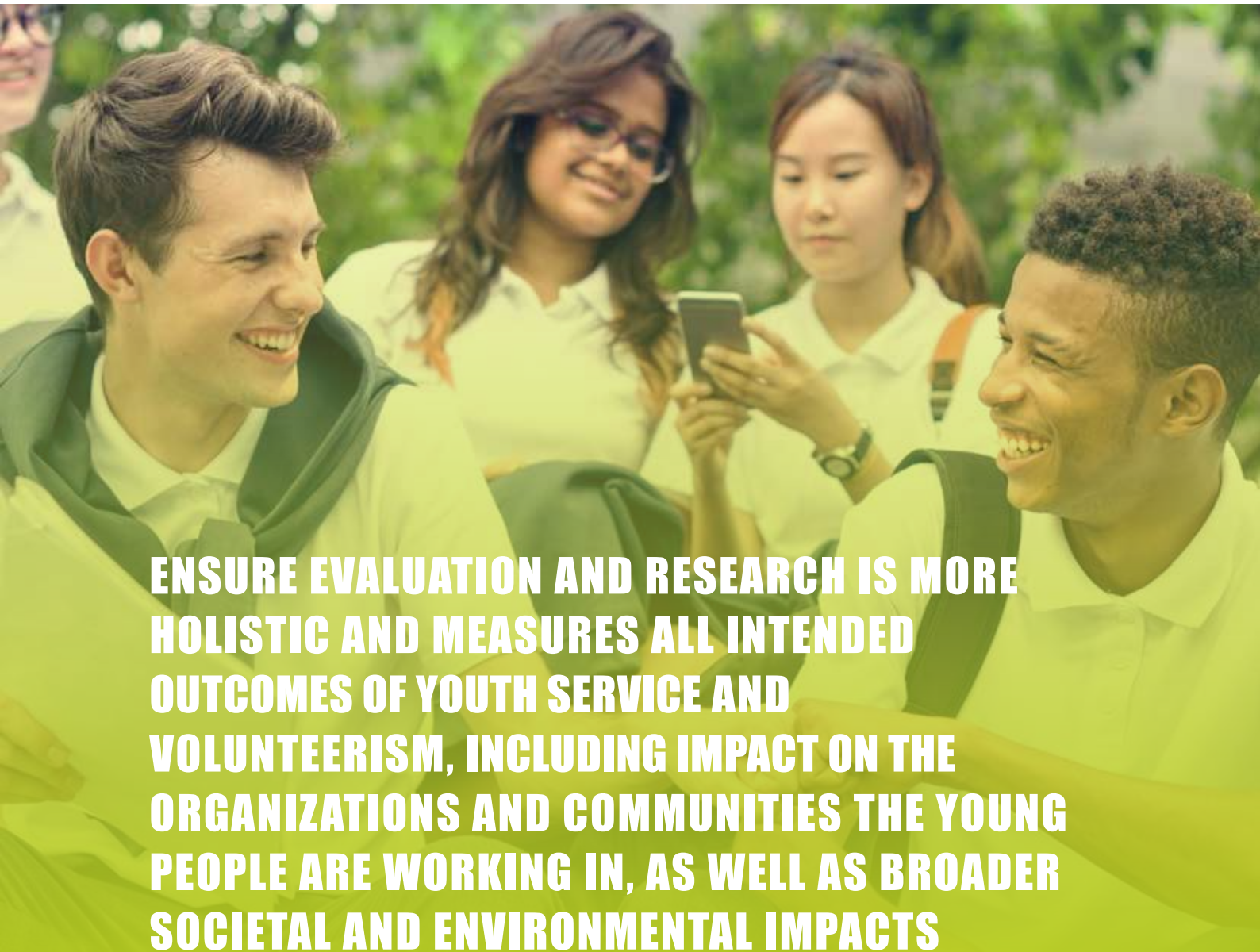
Research suggests that another societal impact that youth service programs have is fostering tolerance for diversity. Also, youth service programs increase the capacity of the civil society organizations that young people are placed in during their service projects.

Part of the difficulty of measuring the societal and environmental impact of youth service and volunteerism is the sheer variety of the kinds of service activities young people participate in, making measuring generalizable impacts of youth service difficult. For example, the three most popular youth service activities in the American college context range from tutoring young people to volunteering in soup kitchens and homeless shelters to promoting sustainability and environmentalism. A critique of the types of activities that young people tend to participate in is that there is a gap between the systemic issues that youth are interested in and the individual nature of the actions that tend to be a part of their youth service and volunteering experiences.

The few studies that use monetary measures to measure the social impact of youth service and volunteerism found that the benefits of youth service programs outweighed the costs.

Leading theories and practices to increase societal and environmental impact found in the literature are:

- Ensuring evaluation and research is more holistic and measures all intended outcomes of youth service and volunteerism, including impact on the organizations and communities the young people are working in, as well as broader societal and environmental impacts;
- Ensuring community initiatives that young people work on during the course of their youth service or volunteerism programs have clear achievable social and environmental goals, that the most effective strategies for addressing a social or environmental problem are used by community organizations, and that community organizations and youth utilize a systemic approach to change;
- Ensuring intergenerational partnerships and that young people have access to decision-makers through the course of their youth service and volunteerism experiences; and
- Ensuring that young people's unique abilities are recognized and young people's strengths are put at the center of youth service and volunteerism programming.



ENSURE EVALUATION AND RESEARCH IS MORE HOLISTIC AND MEASURES ALL INTENDED OUTCOMES OF YOUTH SERVICE AND VOLUNTEERISM, INCLUDING IMPACT ON THE ORGANIZATIONS AND COMMUNITIES THE YOUNG PEOPLE ARE WORKING IN, AS WELL AS BROADER SOCIETAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the literature reviewed the following are recommendations for future research and policy design:

Recommendation 1:

Employment and Social Development Canada should consider co-creating with young people a research program that focuses on better understanding how to engage young people as active citizens and changemakers, how to increase the social and environmental impact of youth focused programs and how to create a culture of service in Canada. High quality and methodically rigorous research developed through meaningful collaborations with young people, youth-serving organizations and communities should be prioritized. Areas of focus that should be considered as part of this program are:

- Developing methods for measuring the impact youth service programs have on communities and organizations, as well as the societal and environmental impact of these programs;
- Developing methods for measuring the social impact of Canadian youth service programs by monetary measures;
- Conducting research that focuses on cross program comparisons;
- Through collaborations with indigenous youth and researchers, understanding the additional barriers faced by, and realities of, indigenous young people in Canada and how youth service programs might contribute to reconciliation;

- Through collaborations with youth and researchers from underrepresented communities, understanding the additional barriers faced by, and realities of, young people from these communities and how to address them;
- Understanding what particular elements of youth service programs lead to positive outcomes (*Jones & Hill, 2009*), including further investigation of the leading practices outlined in this report;
- Measuring the topics, engagement types, organizational types, strategies (Ho et al., 2015) used by programs and the effectiveness of each in achieving societal and environmental impact; and
- Examining what is unique about the contributions young people make to the societal and environmental outcomes during the course of youth service and volunteerism.

Recommendation 2:

Employment and Social Development Canada should consider using evidence based frameworks that promote healthy youth development as part of the Canada Service Corps logic model. For example autonomy, relatedness, competency and purpose driven impact (*Dougherty & Clarke, 2017a; Khanna et al., 2014*) is one such model that should be considered.

Recommendation 3:

Employment and Social Development Canada should consider ensuring that the Canada Service Corps logic model includes a focus on the positive societal and environmental outcomes, and by extension the impacts of this program on communities and organizations, as well as the impacts of on young participants.

Recommendation 4:

Employment and Social Development Canada should consider including a commitment to intergenerational partnerships and the inclusion of youth voice in decision-making as central components of the Canada Service Corps logic model.



Insight 1:

Employment and Social Development Canada should consider, given the increasing instability and financial challenges that young Canadians are facing in their day to day lives, examining the feasibility of providing financial or educational incentives to facilitate participation of underrepresented young people in youth service programs. Young people should be consulted as to which incentives would best suit their needs.

Insight 2:

Building on current successful strategies being already being implemented by partners, Employment and Social Development Canada should consider encouraging program partners to continue to innovate their recruitment strategies to ensure that young people, especially those who are less likely to get involved, are asked to get involved by a trusted mentor or peer, ideally in person, rather than expecting these young people to seek out programs.

Insight 3:

Employment and Social Development Canada should consider collaborating with adjacent youth focused sectors - including those working on youth employment, in education and encouraging youth entrepreneurship - in order to provide coordinating support to young people both while they are participating in youth service and volunteerism and afterward. Other sectors that may also be relevant to collaborate with include settlement agencies, youth in care and mental health.

Insight 4:

Employment and Social Development Canada should consider prioritizing the integration of the leading practices outlined in this report that contribute to young people engaging as changemakers and active citizens in the design of the next phase of the Canada Service Corps:

- Connecting volunteer or service projects to young people's interests;
- Ensuring the work young people do meets real needs and that young people are given the opportunity to take meaningful action during a volunteer or service experience;
- Ensuring strong community partnerships and engagement, and that young people connect with decision-makers during a volunteer or service experience;
- Ensuring respectful intergenerational partnerships and mentorship are prioritized during a volunteer or service experience;
- Ensuring young people are meaningfully engaged in leadership and decision-making throughout their volunteer or service experience; and
- Ensuring that youth service and volunteerism programs integrate time for reflection and that these conversations are linked to systemic issues and long-term action.

As we pulled together the research for this report, it was reassuring to see how the research regarding how to best support young people's healthy youth development echoes much of the research about how to best support young people to engage as changemakers and citizens. When we give young people voice, engage them in real meaningful work that matters to them and that has an impact, prioritize community partnerships and engagement, encourage intergenerational partnerships, value young people's unique abilities and ensure young people connect their experiences to systemic issues and longer term action, we will be ensuring young people are healthier and that they are more likely to be lifelong changemakers and active citizens. By meaningfully engaging young people

we are also more likely to find and implement solutions to the pressing social and environmental challenges we all face.

Youth service and volunteerism has positive benefits, but there is no doubt that improvements can be made to ensure that the next phase of the Canada Service Corps reaches all Canadian youth, and that it increases the positive impacts it has on young participants, our communities and our country. More research is needed, but many insights can be gathered from the current body of knowledge. We hope that this report offers a clear road map for both policy makers, researchers and practitioners.



BY MEANINGFULLY ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE WE ARE ALSO MORE LIKELY TO FIND AND IMPLEMENT SOLUTIONS TO THE PRESSING SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES WE ALL FACE



1.0 INTRODUCTION

This literature review provides a current overview of leading practices in youth volunteerism and service in Canada and internationally with the aim of identifying trends and recurring themes as well as barriers that should be addressed to increase youth engagement in volunteerism and service. Special attention is given to how to engage traditionally underrepresented youth, in particular indigenous youth.

It is the intention that the insight gained from this research will help to inform the development of policy options for the next phase of the Canada Service Corps in 2019 – a signature program for youth service – as well as equip organizations working in the youth volunteerism and service sector in Canada with the knowledge they need to engage a more diverse cohort of young people, better support the young people they work with and increase their societal and environmental impact. The research questions that guided us in the development of this report are as follows:

- What does it mean for a young person (age 15 to 30) to be: a volunteer, a youth service participant, a changemaker, an engaged citizen and to have positive societal or environmental impact?
- What are leading theories and/or practices in Canada and internationally that result in more young people becoming changemakers & civically engaged?
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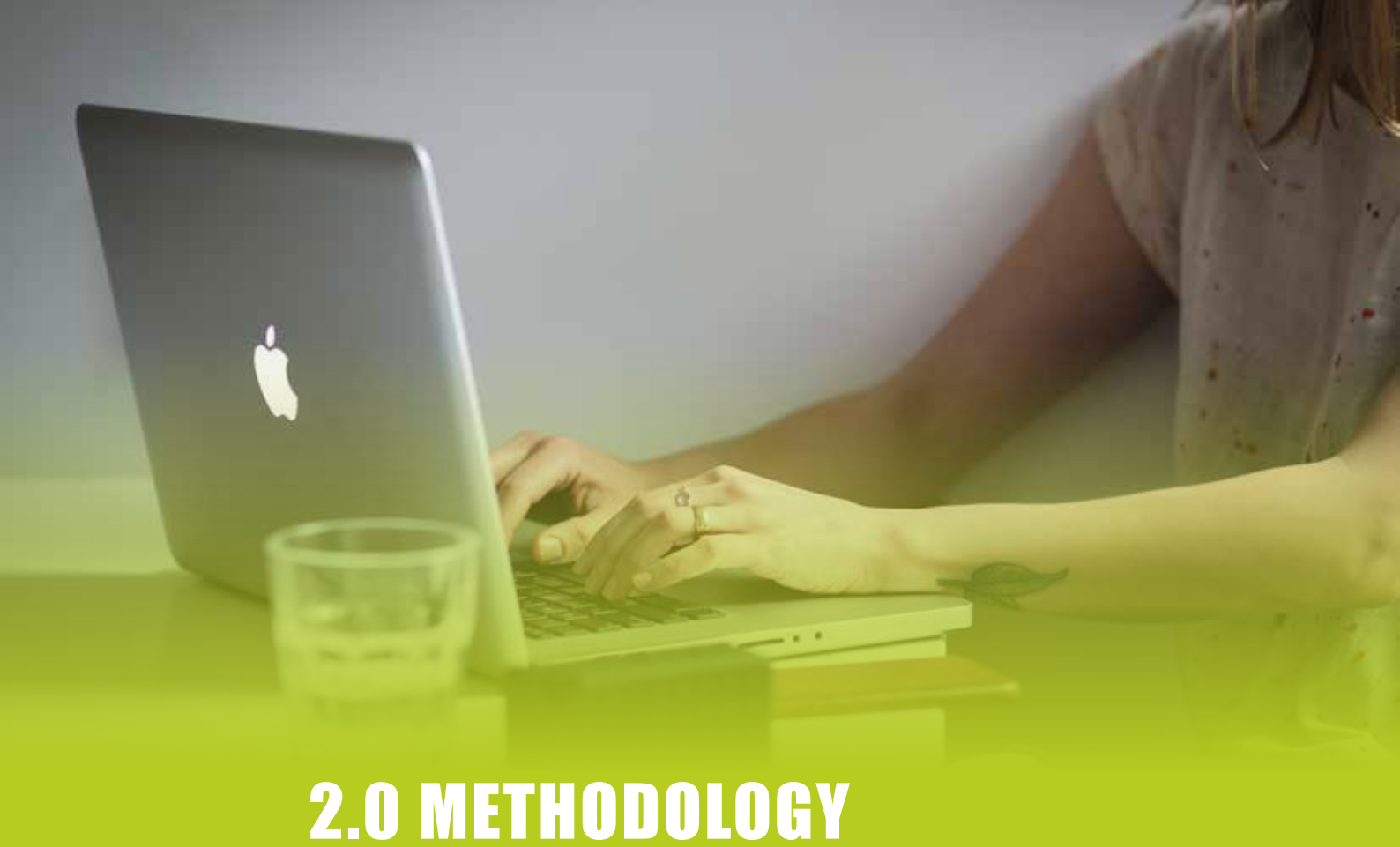


These research questions focus on: 1) what societal and environmental impact can result from youth service and volunteerism and; 2) how young people can best be supported to become lifelong changemakers and active citizens. We intentionally choose to only briefly address the skills and attitudes that young people gain through participation in youth service and volunteerism. Viewing the impact of these programs on the skills and attitudes of young people as only one of several societal outcomes these programs hope to achieve. The questions posed in this report are not easy ones to answer, which is perhaps why they often are not the focus of program evaluations or research. However, this focus was chosen because they are the core of why youth service programs exist; to have positive social and environmental impact and to encourage lifelong engagement of young participants. We are pleased to have been commissioned to do this work, and look forward to how it might reframe the conversations around the ‘why’ of youth service, for policy makers, practitioners and researchers alike.

While, we believe this report provides a valuable foundation for future research, it is important to note that there are

both voices missing and voices that are not as strongly represented in the literature reviewed as we would have hoped. We did not find any literature that speaks specifically to the engagement of young people with disabilities or LGBTQ2+ youth in youth service and volunteerism, and research referencing indigenous youth, newcomer youth, youth from rural and remote areas was sparse. We have made recommendations at the end of this report to address these areas of weakness in the current available literature, but we are aware that this report is less comprehensive and inclusive in scope than we would have liked it to be as a result of what research was available.

After reviewing the relevant research, we have chosen to divide the research into seven sections. In the first four sections we set the context for this work, in the fifth section we discuss how to support young people in becoming changemakers and active citizens, followed by a section discussing societal and environmental impact of youth service and volunteerism programs. Finally, we discuss recommendations and insights for future research, policy and program design.



2.0 METHODOLOGY

To gain an understanding of the current trends and leading practices in youth service and volunteerism we conducted a systematized, interdisciplinary review. Systematized reviews include some elements of a systematic review, but do not aim for complete comprehensiveness (*Grant & Booth, 2009*). We aimed to provide a structured review of the literature from a broad cross-section of academic disciplines and youth-serving practitioners but without seeking to analyse everything that has been written on the subject of youth volunteerism and service.

We reviewed both relevant academic and grey literature, with coverage of English and French language sources from the last 15 years (2003 – 2018). We limited our search to research related to those young people 15 to 30 years of age and with a focus on Canadian research, where possible, while including relevant international research primarily from USA, Europe and Australia.

To begin our search, we first looked for relevant literature in three databases; Google Scholar, ProQuest and Scopus using the following key words:

Synonyms:

- “youth” “young people” “jeunesse” “teenagers” “emerging adults” “adolescent” “youth-led” “student” “étudiant” “youth programming”
- “volunteerism” “volunteer” “bénévolat” “environmental stewardship” “service” “service learning” “community service” “service communautaire”
- “social movements” “activism” “militant” “engagement”
- “social change” “environmental change” “social impact” “social innovation” “community impact”
- “agency” “civic engagement” “purpose” “change makers” “leaders” “leadership” “social entrepreneurs” “économie sociale” “sense of belonging”
- “barriers”
- “indigenous” “reconciliation” “autochtone”
- “official language minority communities” “anglophone” “francophone”
- “Canada”

Terms that were excluded from some English searches:

- “alcohol”, “crime”, “drugs”, “romantic relationships”, “sexual health”, “violence”.

Example of a word combination use is: “youth” AND “engagement” AND “Canada” NOT “alcohol”

Each of the three databases offers different search functionality. In Google Scholar we searched by ‘title’ and bound the searches by year (2003-2018). For the majority of searches in ProQuest we searched for primary key words in the title and abstract and additional key words ‘anywhere’ in the document. We bounded the searches by year (2003-2018) and reviewed only articles for which we could access the full text, but we did not limit our search to peer reviewed articles. For Scopus we searched for combinations of key words in the abstract, title and keywords, bounded by year (2003-2018). We did not limit searches in Scopus to peer reviewed articles.

We ended up using primarily ProQuest and Scopus as many of the searches on Google Scholar offered results that were not relevant for our purposes. If a search in ProQuest and Scopus offered too many results we narrowed our search by including the ‘NOT’ terms mentioned above.



In addition to the academic database searches, we requested relevant reports from the Canada Service Corps team at Employment and Social Development Canada, Statistics Canada, Canada Service Corps national partner organizations (4-H Canada, Apathy is Boring, Boys and Girls Club of Canada, Canadian Wildlife Federation, Chantiers Jeunesse, The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award, Katimavik, Mindyourmind, Oceanwise, YMCA) and We Charity.

We then looked to our own research database of 1052 youth engagement related academic and grey literature that we have compiled over the last 8 years, for relevant articles. This database has been compiled over the course of several research projects led by the Youth & Innovation Project with the aim of creating a database of research relevant to our stated mission; to ensure young people, 15 to 25 years old, are meaningfully engaged in finding and implementing solutions to social, environmental and economic problems, and are valued for the contributions they make.

Once all potential documents were collected we narrowed down our selections by reading the abstracts or introductions of each document to come up with the 112 documents which we reviewed for this literature review, of which, 70 were from the grey literature and 42 were academic articles. In order to meaningfully answer the research questions the documents we reviewed, for the most part, relate directly to youth service and youth volunteerism. However, we also gathered insight from a variety of youth engagement related fields of study including articles focused on: positive youth development, youth leadership, social innovation, youth-led impact, student-led impact, environmental education, youth engagement, civic engagement, work-integrated learning, youth employment, developmental psychology, neuroscience and sociology. This is indicative of the Youth & Innovation Project's transdisciplinary approach which aims to maintain a rigorous academic standard while at the same time ensuring our research work is both applicable and practical.



In any study, it is important to reflect on the limitations of the methodology. Limitations of this literature review include that it is not a complete systematic review; we did not review all available literature on youth volunteerism and service. Instead, we focused on those sources deemed most relevant. It is possible our ‘not’ terms excluded articles that might have contained relevant content. It is also possible that our synonyms, while extensive, were not exhaustive. This included the fact that we did not search for the word ‘voluntariat’ in French, which, it was brought to our attention after the literature review was complete may have been a relevant term to search for. And we only reviewed literature from the last 15 years. In addition, while a transdisciplinary approach has its benefits by offering breadth, it may compromise depth. Another limitation is that in addition to government sources, only the ten organizations who are national signature partners in the Canada Service Corps pilot project as well as We Charity, were asked to recommend relevant documents for this review. Given the relatively small body of Canadian focused literature that we found through traditional academic searches, it may have been helpful to conduct interviews or broaden our search for documents by asking more practitioners for their recommendations of relevant reports or conducting interviews with practitioners. We were also unable to find as much literature as we had hoped that specifically referenced youth with disabilities, LGBTQ2+ youth, indigenous youth, newcomer youth, youth from rural and remote areas and youth from Official Language Minority communities. That said, the methodology used to select relevant literature was systemized and the report provides relevant insights.



3.0 DEFINITIONS

In order to contextualize the literature review, we first asked the question: What does it mean for a young person (age 15 to 30) to be: a youth service participant, a volunteer, a changemaker, an engaged citizen and to have positive societal or environmental impact?

In this section we aim to answer that question by providing relevant definitions for each.

3.1 SERVICE

It has long been recognized that there is a need for a precise definition for what constitutes youth service. A definition is particularly difficult to determine due to the “enormous contextual variations between the programs that fall under the ‘youth service’ category” (Mattero & Campbell-Patton, 2009, p. iii). For the purpose of this report we examine literature from several domains that can be considered youth service; service learning, direct service, mandatory service and voluntary service.

Service learning is defined as “a range of activities intended to provide equal benefit to the service provider (the

student) and the recipient (the community) while maintaining a focus on learning” (Academica Group, 2016, p. 5). Service learning tends to take place in the context of a high school or university program and is tied to curriculum outcomes (Sutherland et al., 2006).

Direct service programs can be considered programs where the primary focus is the community activities that the young participants undertake (Sutherland et al., 2006).

Mandatory service can take place in the context of either service learning or

direct service, where the community activities are a requirement, for example a forty hours of service requirement to graduate from high school (*Planty, Bozick, & Regnier, 2006*). This is differentiated from voluntary service where participants have a choice whether or not they want to participate in a program (*Mattero & Campbell-Patton, 2009*). It is important to note that the questions of mandatory versus voluntary service are separate from the question of whether or not participants are remunerated for their participation.

For the purpose of this report we will use the following definition to encompass all the various types of youth service: “an organized period of substantial engagement and contribution to the local, national or world community, recognized and valued by society” (*Mattero & Campbell-Patton, 2009, p. 47*).





3.2 VOLUNTEER

The line between what can be considered service and what can be considered volunteerism is unclear at best. For the purpose of this report we will use the following definition of volunteerism, “the provision of unpaid help willingly undertaken in the form of time, service or skills, to an organisation or group” (Walsh & Black, 2015, p. 9).

There has been significant debate about the definition of volunteerism, not because of what it includes but because of what it may exclude:

“Unpaid work in a family business, community service orders, or activities undertaken to qualify for government benefits, as part of a student placement, or emergency work during an industrial dispute” (Walsh & Black, 2015, p. 9);

Direct volunteering, “that is, direct help which people offer that is not mediated through a formal organisation” (Walsh & Black, 2015, p. 9);

Informal volunteering, “described as volunteering, which occurs outside non-profit organisations and without a volunteer position description” (Walsh & Black, 2015, p. 9); and

“Emerging forms of social action and social participation amongst young people such as youth-led social enterprises and social entrepreneurship” (Walsh & Black, 2015, p. 10).

There is also growing concern that the traditional definition of volunteerism is problematic as it is a concept with little meaning in many cultural contexts and as such community contributions may “often go unrecognised and unreported” (Walsh & Black, 2015, p. 10). It also may exclude informal community based collaborative work that is particularly

**CHANGEMAKERS SEE THE PATTERNS
AROUND THEM, IDENTIFY PROBLEMS,
DETERMINE SOLUTIONS AND
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common in indigenous communities (Ramey, Lawford, & Rose-Krasnor, 2017).

The definition of volunteerism is also considered problematic in the context of youth engagement because it often is found not to resonate with young people (Dougherty, 2011; ESDC Innovation Lab, 2016; Thibault, Albertus, & Fortier, 2007) or to include the kind of innovative activities they might undertake (Dougherty, 2011).

3.3 CHANGEMAKER

For the purpose of this report we will use the following definition of a changemaker: changemakers see the patterns around them, identify problems, determine solutions and participate in collective action to implement solutions and then adapt to changing situations (Brooks, 2018).

The term changemaker is more inclusive than volunteer, as it can include both formal and informal contributions as well as social and environmental impact taking place in many forms, both emerging and traditional, and at many scales (Ho et al., 2015). It also focuses on impact rather than form, thus encompassing both paid and unpaid work. It can also be seen to be more relevant in a variety of cultural traditions including Canada's indigenous communities, as it embodies a spirit of collective action and activities that are not mediated by organizations or separated from day to day life of a community (Government of Nunavut, n.d.).

3.4 ENGAGED CITIZEN

A second term that is often used in the literature to describe the kind of young person that youth service aims to develop is engaged citizen. For the purpose of this report we define an engaged citizen as someone who exercises their “rights while assuming responsibilities towards other citizens, participating in political institutions (e.g., by voting)” and who is actively engaged in “differing spheres of community life” (Franke & Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2010, p. 35).

The important difference between a young person being a changemaker and an engaged citizen is that an engaged citizen implies that a young people is actively participates in or challenges democratic institutions as part of their engagement.

3.5 POSITIVE SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

For the purpose of this report, we define positive social and environmental impact as any impact that helps to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by ending poverty and inequality, building more prosperous and peaceful societies and / or protecting the planet (Government of Canada, 2018).



4.0 CURRENT CONTEXT

Before we discuss the findings of the literature review, it is important first to put the results in a broader context. In this section we will provide that context by discussing healthy youth development, providing an overview of young people in Canada as well as outlining what we know about young Canadians engagement as changemakers and citizens.

4.1 HEALTHY YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Recent advances in neuroscience and developmental psychology have led experts to place increasing importance on brain development that occurs between 10 and 25 years of age. Brain development during these years is now considered as being equally as important as that which occurs during the first few years of life (*Steinberg, 2014*). Experts suggest that this period is the last key time for interventions that will adapt behavior throughout adulthood (*Steinberg, 2014*). Of particular interest for this report, some experts have suggested that ensuring young people are exposed to intellectually stimulating environments

during this time of life is of particular benefit for brain development (*Steinberg, 2014*). Youth service is specifically mentioned as an example of this kind of intellectually stimulating environment by developmental psychologist Laurence Steinberg (*Steinberg, 2014*). Given this new understanding of the importance of brain development from 15 to 25 years of age, it is relevant to review what the literature says about how best to support to healthy youth development.

The report *Youth who thrive: A review of critical factors and effective programs for 12-25 year olds*, was written in 2014



THERE IS NO INTERVENTION MORE POWERFUL THAN SIMPLY 'BEING WITH'


by Social Program Evaluation Group (SPEG), Queen's University, The Students Commission of Canada and the Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement. This report whose purpose is to “to analyze the critical factors that support youth ages 12-25 in thriving throughout life and through critical life stage transitions” (*Khanna et al.*, 2014, p. 6), is recent, comprehensive and was developed by Canadian organizations for use in a Canadian context, as such it provides a relevant model to understand how healthy youth development might be supported.

Building on well-recognized positive youth development frameworks; the Search Institute Developmental Assets framework, Five Cs Model and self-determination theory, Youth who thrive proposes a new model for healthy youth development which they term the ARC model (*Khanna et al.*, 2014). ARC stands for autonomy, relatedness, and competence the three factors the authors consider to be central to healthy youth development.

In Youth who thrive autonomy is defined as: “having input or voice in

determining one's own behavior” (*Khanna et al.*, 2014, p. 41). Ensuring young people are given the space and opportunity to become increasingly autonomous is an important factor in ensuring positive outcomes (*Khanna et al.*, 2014). Autonomy can be encouraged in a variety of ways, but the research is consistent that giving young people the opportunity to participate in decision-making and leadership opportunities is key in the development of autonomy (*Khanna et al.*, 2014). It is important to note however that autonomy must be balanced with structure and guidance. This is especially true for young people living in high-risk situations, who are likely to need more guidance and structure and less autonomy (*Khanna et al.*, 2014).

Relatedness is defined in Youth who thrive as “the need to feel belonging and connection with others” (*Khanna et al.*, 2014, p. 49). As psychologist Robert Epstein explains “there is no intervention more powerful than simply ‘being with’” (*Epstein*, 2010, p. 333). Inclusive environments where a respect for diversity is present are critical. “Opportunities for young people to



YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY MUST BE PREPARED THAT MODERN ADULTHOOD ALSO INVOLVES MULTIPLE ADJUSTMENTS, CHANGES OF DIRECTION, BACKWARD STEPS AND FALSE STARTS

explore their ethno-cultural heritage in a supportive social context free from discrimination” must be present in order for programs to foster relatedness amongst young people of diverse backgrounds (*Khanna et al.*, 2014, pp. 91–92).

The Youth who thrive report describes competence “as knowing how to handle situations effectively. Competence is developed through opportunities for skill-building and mastery of physical, intellectual, psychological, emotional, social, and cultural skills” (*Khanna et al.*, 2014, p. 58). Having developed a particular competency means “more than just knowledge or skills. It involves the ability to meet complex demands, by drawing on and mobilising psychosocial resources (including skills and attitudes) in a particular context” (*Ontario Public Service*, 2016, p. 9). However, it is important to note that competencies are culturally mediated... ”with limited evidence to indicate that there are competences that are

universal” (*Khanna et al.*, 2014, p. 63). What is most important is that whatever competencies are developed have relevance for the young people who develop them, tasks “that are misaligned for the individual or tasks that have no intrinsic value for the youth will miss the mark” (*Khanna et al.*, 2014, p. 93).

Building on the Youth who thrive report in a report commissioned by The Lawson Foundation in 2017, the Youth & Innovation Project suggests that there may be a fourth key element for healthy youth development. This fourth element, purpose driven impact, can be understood as recognizing the unique abilities that young people possess while they are young and giving young people the opportunity to use these abilities in a context that has the potential for positive social, environmental or economic impact (*Dougherty & Clarke*, 2017a). Purpose can be defined as an “intention to accomplish something that is at once



meaningful to the self and of consequence to the world beyond the self” (*Damon, Menon, & Bronk, 2003, p. 121*) and is connected to healthy outcomes (*Damon et al., 2003; Dezutter et al., 2014*). But purpose alone is not sufficient, both the identification of a goal as well as participating in specific activities to attain that goal are vital (*Damon et al., 2003*).

4.2 YOUNG PEOPLE IN CANADA

Young Canadians today are more educated and diverse than ever before (*Statistics Canada, 2018*). In a 2016 study, 27% of 15 to 34 year olds identified as a member of a visible minority (*Statistics Canada, 2018*). And from 2006 to 2016, the number of youth aged 15 to 34 in the First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities increased by 39% (*Statistics Canada, 2018*). 97% of Canadian 15 year olds are attending high school, 24% of 19 year olds are attending college and 36% of 21 year olds are attending university (*Statistics Canada, 2018*).

While more young Canadians are attending post-secondary education, tuition fees for full-time undergraduate students have increased more quickly than the rate of inflation over the last ten years (*Statistics Canada, 2018*). Young people today have more credentials yet will have lower net wealth than their parents did in the early 1980s (*Expert Panel on Youth Employment, 2017*). Full-time jobs are less common and more likely to be temporary and some experts suggest that more than one in five people with a degree are employed in precarious work (*Expert Panel on Youth Employment, 2017*). The reality is even more challenging for indigenous youth aged



15 to 29 who have an employment rate almost 20% lower than their non-indigenous counterparts (*Expert Panel on Youth Employment*, 2017). Another group that faces heightened employment challenges are young English-speaking Quebecers who have lower employment rates than their French-speaking counterparts (*Quebec Community Groups Network*, 2009).

The transition to adulthood for Canada's young people is more complex with more diverse pathways than in the past and takes longer than it did for previous generations (*Arnett*, 2004). For those who have both financial and emotional support the increased choices and opportunities young people have today can be positive, however for those who do not have support it poses "new challenges to youth who are

increasingly called upon to build their own safety nets" (*Franke & Human Resources and Skills Development Canada*, 2010, p. 6). Experts are also concerned with higher rates of mood disorders amongst 15 to 24 year olds as compared to other age groups, and of particular concern are indigenous youth who are even more at risk for poor mental health (*Statistics Canada*, 2018). An additional worry for many experts is that the transition to adulthood is no longer one that can be considered synonymous with a transition to stability. Young people today must be prepared that modern adulthood also involves multiple adjustments, changes of direction, backward steps and false starts (*Franke & Human Resources and Skills Development Canada*, 2010).



4.3 YOUNG CHANGEMAKERS & CITIZENS

For the most part young Canadians believe that if they work together as a group they can make a difference (*Environics Institute, 2017*) and they possess a sense of civic responsibility (*Bastedo, Dougherty, LeDuc, Rudny, & Sommers, 2012*). Notably, 66% of Canadian youth, 15 to 19 years of age, volunteer (*Statistics Canada, 2018*). However, this statistic may be significantly influenced by school requirements for mandatory service (*Hientz, Murpy-Zommerschoe, Sladowski, & Stoney, 2010*). For young people between the ages of 20 to 34 years of age, 42% volunteer (*Statistics Canada, 2018*) and 81% of those aged 25 to 34 say they donate to a charity or non-profit (*Statistics Canada, 2018*). While more young people volunteer than other age cohorts, they volunteer for less hours on average than older cohorts (*Hientz et al., 2010; René, 2011*) and their volunteering tends to be more episodic (*Lopez & Marcelo, 2007*). The most common reasons given by young Canadians for volunteering is to give back and to help others (*Bourassa, 2018; Environics Institute, 2017*). Other common reasons why young Canadians volunteer include “achieving a sense of accomplishment, using one’s skills and

experiences, exploring one’s own strengths, networking and meeting people, and improving one’s health or well-being” (*Environics Institute, 2017, p. 52*).

While young people may be volunteering at higher rates than those older than them, youth voter turnout has been on a steady decline in Canada and most of the western world for the last 40 years (*Rudny, Dougherty, Blais, Dumitrescu, & Loewen, 2010*). The reason for this is clear. As each new generation of young people becomes eligible to vote, fewer of them are choosing to opt into the democratic process. In the 1960s, 18 year olds turned out to vote at a rate of 70%, but only half as many 18 year olds who came of age in 2000s voted in the first election for which they were eligible (*Loewen, 2013*). On voting day for the 2015 Federal election, Canadians saw proof that a reversal of this long-time trend is possible. In 2015, 18 to 29 year old Canadians voted at a rate that was 15% higher than in 2011 (*Anthony, Anderson, & Hilderman, 2016*). It is hard to know if this increase in youth voter turnout will be sustained in future. But research suggests that it might be. Experts suggest that voting is habit-forming and young people who have voted in the past are more likely to vote in the future (*Goldirova, 2015*).



As the differences between the trends of young people volunteering and voting illustrate it is important to note that it is unclear whether engaging in one kind of changemaking or civic engagement directly correlates to a young person engaging in other civic engagement activities. Voting, signing a petition, attending a community meeting, contacting a politician and other forms of civic engagement are distinct activities and experts do not agree if engagement in any one activity is a predictor of other forms of engagement (*Bastedo et al., 2012; Gélinau, 2013*). Young people's civic engagement and changemaking may not conform to traditional models and forms (*Bastedo et al., 2012; Gauthier, 2010; René, 2011*); some suggest that what it means to be engaged has changed due to technology and social media offering young people new and untraditional ways of becoming engaged (*Opportunity Nation, 2014*). Changemaking activities that young people now choose to engage in may involve looser networks (*O'Rourke, 2012*), less hierarchical structures (*Pleyers, 2004; Riemer, Lynes, & Hickman, 2013*), an embrace of entrepreneurship (*Clarke & Dougherty, 2010*) and a focus less on charity and instead on leadership and community impact (*ESDC Innovation Lab, 2016*).

Young people are significantly more likely to volunteer "when their families emphasized an ethic of social responsibility" (*Flanagan, Bowes, Jonsson, Csapo, & Sheblanova, 2010, p. 457*) and if they have a parent or family member who has volunteered (*Andolina, Jenkins, Zukin, & Keeter, 2003; Grimm Jr, Dietz, Spring, Arey, & Foster-Bey, 2005; Lopez & Marcelo, 2007; Sutherland et al., 2006*). "Strong



connections with family, friends, religious organisations and schools are a predictor of volunteerism among young people” (Walsh & Black, 2015, p. 27). Students who do well in school are also more likely to volunteer (Grimm Jr et al., 2005).

Those with more education and higher income levels are more likely to vote. “Those who have attended a post-secondary institution have a likelihood of voting more often by almost 30 percentage points than those who have never attended a post-secondary institution. Similarly, young Canadians who are active students (at any level) have a turnout rate 7 percentage points higher than those who are not students” (Gélineau, 2013, p. 7). Young indigenous Canadians vote over 20 percentage points less than non-indigenous youth (Gélineau, 2013). “Those living in urban settings vote about 4 percentage points more often than young Canadians living in rural areas. Finally, respondents who were born in Canada vote more often than those who were born abroad by almost 6 points” (Gélineau, 2013, pp. 7–8).

When it comes to youth service, in the Canadian context youth with no former experience volunteering were less likely to participate in service (Bourassa,

2018; R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd., 2006). In the US young people of color, of lower socio-economic status and those who have not attended post-secondary are considerably underrepresented in service (Grimm Jr et al., 2005; Pluim & Jorgenson, 2012). In the Canadian context, research on Canadian youth volunteer abroad programs echoes the American findings, stating that “the overwhelming majority of students in the program are white and female” (Pluim & Jorgenson, 2012, p. 7). Another report indicated that youth service participants are likely to have at least one parent who has attended a post-secondary institution, with average parental income of \$118,000 (Dobbie & Fryer Jr., 2015).

Despite young people’s engagement, mainstream discourse surrounding young people continues to be predominately negative (Ho, 2013). Particularly relevant for the purpose of this report in a recent Abacus Data Inc. poll commissioned by a coalition of Canada’s leading youth-serving organizations, which noted that 70% of Canadian adults expressed that they “feel that young Canadians are not that prepared or not at all prepared to be active civic leaders in their community” (Coletto, 2018, p. 1).



5.0 YOUNG PEOPLE AS CHANGEMAKERS & ACTIVE CITIZENS

Now that we have provided the context for the issue at hand, the next two sections of this report address the core questions posed in this literature review. In this section we aim to answer the research questions:

- What are leading theories and/or practices in Canada and internationally that result in more young people becoming changemakers & civically engaged?
- What are the barriers to youth engaging in volunteerism and service in Canada?

Before exploring barriers to engaging young people and leading practices in youth service and volunteerism that lead to young people becoming changemakers and engaged citizens, it is useful to review what the literature says about whether or not youth volunteer and service programs are currently successful in ensuring young

people become lifelong changemakers and engaged citizens.

In both the grey and academic literature the lack of standardized evaluations and high quality research that is consistent and methodologically rigorous in the youth service sector is repeatedly discussed (*Lakin & Mahoney, 2006; Mattero & Campbell-Patton, 2009; McBride, Benítez, & Sherraden, 2003*). In the grey literature reviewed from youth leadership and work-integrated learning fields, the need to improve research and evaluation is also discussed (*Academica Group, 2016; Stauch & Cornelisse, 2016*), which suggests a lack of high quality research and evaluation is a concern across youth-focused sectors.

Nonetheless, we can draw some conclusions about the impact youth service and volunteerism has on young people's likelihood of engaging as changemakers and engaged citizens in



THE RESEARCH IS CLEAR THAT YOUTH SERVICE INCREASES YOUNG PEOPLE'S AWARENESS OF SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

the longer term. The research is clear that youth service increases young people's awareness of social and environmental issues. "In performing community service, people may also become familiar with social problems of which they were previously unaware" (Hart, Donnelly, Youniss, & Atkins, 2007, p. 499) explains one academic study. Alumni of the program City Year credited the program with raising their awareness of social issues (Anderson, Laguarda, & Williams, 2007) and "eight years after enrolling in AmeriCorps, State and National and NCCC members are more likely to assess and reflect on the needs of their community" (Corporation For National & Community Service, 2008, p. 16). Several other academic studies suggest the same is true of service learning programs (Planty et al., 2006; Sutherland et al., 2006).

When it comes to the likelihood that a young person will continue volunteering

after participation in a youth service program, the literature suggests that the impact of youth service on young people's longer term volunteering habits are mixed. A 2010 study in Australia "found that 43% of adult volunteers in Australia had undertaken volunteer work as children, compared to only 27% of non-volunteers" suggesting the volunteering when young does have an impact on longer term habits (Walsh & Black, 2015, p. 22). For the US program City Year a grey literature study explains "in the year immediately following their year of service, nearly all alumni reported... becom[ing] involved in some type of service/volunteer activity, and work[ing] to solve problems in their community" (Anderson, Laguarda, & Williams, 2007, p. ii). For AmeriCorps alumni, a grey literature study outlines that after September 11th, "a higher percentage of State and National and NCCC alumni reported donating their time than did the national population"

(*Corporation for National & Community Service*, 2004, p. 36). Questions remain though about how long lasting these effects are (*Anderson et al.*, 2007; *Planty et al.*, 2006), and whether the increased levels of volunteerism are because the kinds of youth who participate in service programs in the first place are more likely to be volunteers already (*Metz & Youniss*, 2003). A grey literature program evaluation of the Canadian Katimavik program found that “a majority of both Applicants (69%) and Participants (64%) reported involvement in volunteer work prior to their application to the program, and have continued to do so since the time of their application to (60%) / participation in the program (64%)” (*R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd.*, 2006, p. 19).

When it comes to other types of engagement, there are some reports in a longitudinal study of increases in informal volunteering as a result of AmeriCorps (*Corporation for National & Community Service*, 2004). However, another report measuring the eight year impact of AmeriCorps shows no effect on rates of donating to non-profit organizations and social causes (*Corporation For National & Community Service*, 2008).

As to whether or not youth service leads to increased civic participation, results are mixed (*McAdam & Brandt*, 2009). A longitudinal study suggests that “participation in AmeriCorps results in statistically significant positive effects on Community-Based Activism behavior for both State and National members and NCCC members” (*Corporation for National & Community Service*, 2004, p. 54). A grey literature longitudinal study of

City Year’s alumni suggests that the program supports the development of psychological predispositions, skills, and institutional memberships that set corps members on a life path of even greater civic engagement” (*Anderson et al.*, 2007, p. 2). A report by the Corporation for National & Community Service concludes that “introducing youth from disadvantaged circumstances to volunteer opportunities may provide an entry point to civic participation” (*Spring, Dietz, & Grimm*, 2007, p. 24). Likewise, another report that studied the effects of civic education on visible minorities iterated that “community service has the most consistent positive effect. Community service seems to be a more effective manner to promote political knowledge and participation than more traditional and cognitively oriented forms of civic education” (*Claes, Hooghe, & Stolle*, 2009, p. 629). However, in an academic article which assesses the effects of Teach for America (TFA) the authors find that “far from increasing subsequent civic involvement, the TFA experience appears, for some, to depress current service participation” (*McAdam & Brandt*, 2009, p. 20). The authors of this report suggest that this may be due to a sense from participants that the Teach for America approach is ineffective and also due to the fact that some participants found their experience isolating (*McAdam & Brandt*, 2009). These findings suggest that the service opportunities must be well designed to achieve the goal of long-term civic engagement.

Research surrounding whether or not youth service leads to increased voting rates were also mixed. Alumni of AmeriCorps had higher rates of

registering and voting than the nation as a whole during the 2000 Presidential election (*Corporation for National & Community Service, 2004*), however “AmeriCorps had no impact on State and National and NCCC members’ voting rates in the 2004 Presidential election. Voting rates for State and National members in the 2006 Congressional mid-term election were lower than for the comparison group, while there were no differences for NCCC members” (*Corporation For National & Community Service, 2008, p. 24*). For City Year alumni, “in spring 2004 and again in 2006, City Year participants reported voting at a significantly higher rate in the 2003 and 2005 state and local elections than did members of the comparison group. That is, in spring 2004, 41 percent of all eligible City Year participants reported voting in the 2003 state and local elections compared with 33 percent of the comparison group” (*Anderson et al., 2007, p. 37*). Academic studies have found that school-required community service, as well as extracurricular activities in high school, are a strong predictor of adult voting (*Hart et al., 2007; Thomas & Mcfarland, 2010*).

5.1 BARRIERS TO ENGAGING YOUNG PARTICIPANTS

While youth volunteerism and service programs generally have a positive effect on young participants’ civic engagement, if these programs hope to encourage changemaking and engaged citizenship amongst those who would not have become engaged otherwise, it is important to consider who participates in these programs and who does not participate and what are the barriers to engagement faced by young people. As previously discussed, in the


Canadian context young people with no previous volunteer experience are less likely to participate in service (*Bourassa, 2018*) and research from the US indicates that young people of color, those of lower socio-economic status and those who have not attended post-secondary are considerably underrepresented in youth service programs (*Dobbie & Fryer Jr., 2015; Grimm Jr et al., 2005; Pluim & Jorgenson, 2012*). In this section we discuss what are main barriers according to the literature that impede young people, particularly indigenous youth, from engaging in volunteerism or service.

Throughout the literature a main barrier to youth engaging in volunteerism or service that is discussed is young people not having been asked to participate. Often volunteers are expected to reach out to organizations or find opportunities for engagement themselves (*Lopez & Marcelo, 2007*). According to the Canadian Millennials Social Values Study conducted in 2017 by The Environics Institute, 35 percent of young Canadians said that the reason they haven’t volunteered is because no one asked them to. According to this same study, men and self-employed young people were most likely to have never been asked to volunteer (*Environics Institute, 2017*). A US study suggested that youth from low-income communities are less likely to be asked to serve than other young people (*Roehlkepartain, 2007b*). An Australian report states that “young people who are directly approached or invited are four times more likely to volunteer than those who have to create and navigate their own volunteering opportunities” (*Walsh & Black, 2015, p. 25*).

In addition, according to both grey and academic literature young people do not engage in volunteerism or service due to structural and/or financial barriers (*ESDC Innovation Lab, 2016; Froment-Prévosto & Fortier, 2005; Tiessen & Heron, 2012; Walsh & Black, 2015*). Structural barriers can, for example, include things like the length of a program or required time commitment (*Pluim & Jorgenson, 2012*) or what is required to complete the recruitment process (*Walsh & Black, 2015*). The same has been found to be true in adjacent youth focused sectors including work-integrated learning (*Academica Group, 2016*). A grey literature report in Australia states that “even school-based volunteering programs may present too many logistical barriers to young people’s participation: the need to navigate the ‘red tape’ of public liability insurance,

litigation, permissions, police checks and the other formalities that attend many volunteering programs acts as a deterrent for some young people” (*Walsh & Black, 2015, p. 25*).

Increasingly financial barriers are also proving challenging for young people to overcome, as outlined in a 2018 Abacus Data poll. “Barriers to youth engagement are clear to the public. The rising cost of post-secondary education means youth need to work more to help pay for it, leaving less time to become engaged” (*Coletto, 2018, p. 7*). This is echoed by a report outlining why young people in Canada, even those who are post-secondary students, do not participate in work-integrated learning. The report states “24% of university graduate respondents identifying ‘didn’t get paid’ as a major challenge” (*Academica Group, 2016, p. 44*).



A MAIN BARRIER TO YOUTH ENGAGING IN VOLUNTEERISM OR SERVICE IS YOUNG PEOPLE NOT HAVING BEEN ASKED TO PARTICIPATE



According to three grey literature reports, in addition to feeling stretched financially, young people, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, also feel time pressures which prohibit their engagement due to their other responsibilities and competing priorities (Bourassa, 2018; Ekos Research Associates Inc., 2008; O'Rourke, 2012; Spring et al., 2007). For indigenous young people the high prevalence of poverty, addictions, teenage pregnancies, high-school dropouts and homelessness may result in indigenous youth being disengaged in spaces where they can influence decisions as well as being disengaged from civil society in general (Matthew, 2009).

Significant barriers discussed in the literature to young people staying engaged in youth service or volunteerism are ageism (Ménard, 2010), tokenism (Matthew, 2009; Monchalin et al., 2016) and failure of civil society organizations to meaningfully engage young people perspectives and ideas in the course of volunteer or service programs. Tokenism was identified as a particular challenge for indigenous youth in two academic articles (Matthew, 2009;

Monchalin et al., 2016), where the participants in the programs often felt that they were not being treated respectfully or equally, their viewpoints were disregarded and were not taken seriously because the adults had stereotyped and racially profiled them (Matthew, 2009) and indigenous youth “were often excluded from important conversations” (Monchalin et al., 2016, p. 145). An Australian report speaks of how young people are “sensitive to being assigned unattractive, unengaging or unsatisfying tasks by voluntary organisations or to the failure of organisations to consult with them about what matters and what best works for them...organisational culture can make or break the success of [young] volunteer involvement” (Walsh & Black, 2015, p. 25).

For indigenous youth in particular significant barriers according to one academic study that limits indigenous youth participation is the effect of colonization as well as intergenerational trauma. Colonial intervention has enforced western ideologies of leadership and governance, resulting in decreased indigenous representation and participation (Monchalin et al.,

2016). Intergenerational trauma has resulted in a focus on healing of individuals and communities rather than young people taking on external leadership roles (*Monchalin et al., 2016*). Another academic article speaks of the Eurocentric nature of many youth volunteerism programs and as a result these programs have limited relevance for indigenous youth (*Aylward, Abu-Zahra, & Giles, 2015*).


5.2 LEADING PRACTICES IN ADDRESSING BARRIERS TO ENGAGING YOUNG PARTICIPANTS

In order to increase the likelihood that diverse young people will participate in youth service and volunteerism programs, the following leading practices from youth service and volunteerism, as well as other domains of youth engagement, are worth considering.

ASK YOUNG PEOPLE TO GET INVOLVED

The consistent finding throughout the grey and academic literature is that a barrier to youth engaging in service and

volunteerism is that they have not been asked to participate (*Hastings, Barrett, Barbuto Jr., & Bell, 2010; Hientz et al., 2010; Metz & Youniss, 2003; Walsh & Black, 2015*). As such a leading practice is to meet youth where they are and ask them to get involved rather than expecting them to seek out programs (*Dougherty, 2011; Walsh & Black, 2015*). How young people are asked to participate is considered important. Being asked to become involved by someone they trust, for example a teacher (*Corporation for National & Community Service, 2009; Spring et al., 2007*), a peer or a friend has been shown to be an effective strategy (*Helferty & Clarke, 2009; René, 2011*). In addition, asking a young person to participate in person is consistently shown to be the most effective method for engagement (*Anthony et al., 2016; ESDC Innovation Lab, 2016*). A grey literature report suggests, the act of asking a young person to contribute can be an end in itself as it affirms that young person's value to their community and society at large (*ESDC Innovation Lab, 2016*).



THE ACT OF ASKING A YOUNG PERSON TO CONTRIBUTE CAN BE AN END IN ITSELF AS IT AFFIRMS THAT YOUNG PERSON'S VALUE TO THEIR COMMUNITY AND SOCIETY AT LARGE



FINANCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL INCENTIVES

In order to address financial and structural barriers to engagement incentives to facilitate participation are a leading practice discussed in the literature. In Australia, “an evaluation of the Young Volunteer Challenge, for example, found that financial incentives facilitated the participation of a greater diversity of young volunteers, including a greater diversity of socioeconomic, ethnicity, gender, disability and qualification characteristics” (*Walsh & Black, 2015, p. 41*). Awards may be another type of incentive that may encourage more young people of diverse ethnic backgrounds to participate in volunteerism (*Walsh & Black, 2015*).

One such example of a volunteering incentive is the Education Award which is awarded to all participants of AmeriCorps. AmeriCorps offers “each member who completes a year of service...an education award” (*Corporation For National & Community Service, 2008, p. 36*). This award can be used to pay for post-

secondary education or to repay student loans. According to a report measuring the eight year impact of AmeriCorps on alumni, 70% of the survey participants revealed that the education award was one of the primary reasons that motivated them to apply to AmeriCorps (*Corporation For National & Community Service, 2008*). In interviews with Canadian young people conducted by ESDC Innovation Lab they heard that “the role of incentives and recompense does not undermine the notion of community service, and can in fact be a necessary approach to making opportunities more accessible to young people who do not have the resources to otherwise engage in the civic benefits of service” (*ESDC Innovation Lab, 2016, p. 4*).



FLEXIBILITY AND COORDINATED SUPPORT

In order to address structural barriers recommendations from other domains of the youth sector suggest that programs “to be nimble and flexible enough to meet youth where they are” (*Expert Panel on Youth Employment, 2017, p. 32*). Another report reminds us that “different youth negotiate multiple changes at different times than their peers, within different intra- and inter-cultural environments, with varying resources, and therefore require flexible, culturally appropriate and responsive supports throughout these transitions” (*Khanna et al., 2014, p. 68*). In the context of engaging marginalized youth, leading practices include delivering “a high touch with personalized approaches” (*ESDC Innovation Lab, 2016, p. 7*) as well as ensuring a variety of programs and structures are offered so that diverse young people can participate despite

time and financial constraints they might face in their day to day lives (*Bourassa, 2018*).

Addressing structural barriers also means coordinating support and ensuring a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach to supporting young people, particularly those who can be considered at risk (*Franke & Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2010; Spano, 2003*). This might include connecting youth service and volunteerism initiatives with other youth focused programming such as those aimed at addressing youth unemployment, encouraging young people to attend post-secondary education, those programs encouraging young people to become entrepreneurs as well as settlement agencies, youth in care organizations and mental health organizations. To ensure that young people will be most likely to continue their engagement beyond their time in a youth service or volunteer program it is



important that these programs filter “young people into other institutions, such as colleges, churches, and political organizations, which open up additional opportunities to volunteer” (*Hill & Den Dulk*, 2013, p. 182). Attachment to institutions that continue beyond a particular program are important to continued engagement (*Planty et al.*, 2006; *Shen*, 2005). This could include finding ways of intentionally integrating alumni into the governance of youth service or volunteerism organizations themselves (*America’s Service Commissions and Innovations in Civic Participation*, 2014).

5.3 LEADING PRACTICES IN ENGAGING YOUTH AS CHANGEMAKERS AND ACTIVE CITIZENS

In order to increase the likelihood that youth service and volunteerism programs will result in young people engaging as changemakers and active citizens in the long-term, the following leading practices from youth service and volunteerism as well as other domains of youth engagement are worth considering.

CONNECT PROJECTS TO YOUNG PEOPLE'S INTERESTS

A leading practice to ensure that youth service and volunteer programs result in young people staying engaged as changemakers and engaged citizens is to ensure the projects they work on are of interest to them. The importance of young people being engaged in working on issues they are passionate about and that they see as valuable is repeated time and time again in both the grey and academic literature (*Bourassa, 2018; Mclean, Bergen, Truong-White, Rottmann, & Glithero, 2017; Ramey et al., 2017; Skinner & French, 2012; Thibault et al., 2007; Wagner, 2012; Walsh & Black, 2015; Zeldin, 2004*). “A clear connection between students’ lives and what they are learning is essential for civic engagement” (*Mclean et al.,*

2017, p. 95). It is also important that young people that the way young people are engaged is relevant to them, the form of engagement as well as the content are significant (*ESDC Innovation Lab, 2016*). Connecting young people’s service experience with their interests is especially important for disadvantaged youth (*Roehlkepartain, 2007b*). One example of a how a program connects indigenous young people’s interests with their volunteer work is Northern Youth Abroad. Young participants work with a self-selected mentor in their communities prior to the program. They complete a series of assignments, self-assessments and community research then their placements are made based on the interests that participants express in these assignments (*Aylward et al., 2015*).





“THE ONLY WAY TO BECOME A CHANGEMAKER IS TO BE ONE AND PRACTICE”

BILL DRAYTON
ASHOKA, FOUNDER

REAL NEEDS AND REAL IMPACT

Mentioned repeatedly in the academic and grey literature as a leading practice is that the work young people do in the context of youth service and volunteerism meets real needs and that young people are given the opportunity to take meaningful action (*ESDC Innovation Lab*, 2016; *Hastings et al.*, 2010; *Lakin & Mahoney*, 2006; *Myrah*, 2009; *Riemer et al.*, 2013; *Roehlkepartain*, 2007a; *Seider, Rabinowicz, & Gillmor*, 2012; *Sutherland et al.*, 2006; *Thibault et al.*, 2007; *Wagner*, 2012). As Bill Drayton, founder of the global organization Ashoka explains “the only way to become a changemaker is to be one and practice” (*Drayton, n.d.*, p. 5). An example of this kind of meaningful engagement is CityStudio in Vancouver, a program whose vision is “to co-create a city where students are deeply

engaged inside City Hall to make our city more livable, joyful and sustainable” (*CityStudio Vancouver*, 2017, p. 8). As part of CityStudio’s manifesto the organization commits that young people involved will do something real and tackle global issues at a local level (*CityStudio Vancouver*, 2017).

Academic literature also suggests that it is essential for young people to see the positive impacts of their engagement (*Ho et al.*, 2015; *René*, 2011; *Riemer et al.*, 2013; *Thomas & Mcfarland*, 2010). “One of the key sustaining factors is for youth to believe they made a difference. Thus, organizations and programmes that provide opportunities for short-term measurable impact will likely be more successful in engaging the youth in the long term” (*Riemer et al.*, 2013, p. 9).



ENGAGE WITH COMMUNITIES AND DECISION-MAKERS

That youth service organizations develop and maintain strong community partnerships and ensure input is gathered from relevant community stakeholders is as a leading practice in youth service and across the youth engagement sector more broadly (*Academica Group, 2016; America's Service Commissions and Innovations in Civic Participation, 2014; Celio, Durlak, & Dymnicki, 2011; Franke & Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2010; Seider et al., 2012*). Program design should include developing “community partnerships and solicit and accept community input on the desired elements and goals of service projects” (*Celio et al., 2011, p. 167*) and as the manifesto of CityStudio explains “you can't solve a complex problem without hearing from everyone affected by it” (*CityStudio Vancouver, 2017, p. 2*). In the context of working in indigenous communities ensuring program flexibility to allow for community

ownership of projects and integration of indigenous culture is a leading practice for successful youth programs (*Arellano, Halsall, Forneris, & Gaudet, 2018*). This is also particularly relevant in the context of official language minority youth, who view collaboration across language lines as of particular importance (*Quebec Community Groups Network, 2009*).

To increase the likelihood that young people will stay engaged as citizens in the longer term, several grey literature reports suggest that it is important that young people connect with decision-makers in the community (*Public Policy Forum, 2012*). Talking with decision-makers about public policy (*Gélineau, 2013*) and feeling that working with decision-makers and government can lead to positive change increases the likelihood that a young person will remain an engaged citizen (*Corporation for National & Community Service, 2004*).



INTERGENERATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS & MENTORSHIP

Another consistent theme repeated throughout the literature was the importance of respectful intergenerational partnerships (Coletto, 2018; Corrigan, 2007; Dougherty & Clarke, 2017a; Ramey et al., 2017; René, 2011; Shen, 2005; Skinner & French, 2012; Zeldin, 2004) and mentorship (Arnold, Cohen, & Warner, 2009; Bourassa, 2018; Corrigan, 2007; ESDC Innovation Lab, 2016; Michelson, 2005; Monchalin et al., 2016; Perkins, 2008; Shen, 2005; Spano, 2003; Wagner, 2012). This is especially important for engaging marginalized young people (Blanchet-Cohen, Mack, & Cook, 2010) and is particularly culturally relevant in an indigenous context (4Rs Youth Movement, n.d.; Monchalin et al., 2016). In this context, who the mentors are is an important consideration, “service-learning is perceived to have

well-educated, middle-class, and white leadership. Finding ways to broaden leadership will offer young people more role models to motivate and guide them into a lifetime of service” (Roehlkepartain, 2007b, p. 1).

It is important that these relationships are based on deep respect and trust (Blanchet-Cohen et al., 2010; Wagner, 2012) and that young people feel a sense of safety and clarity from mentors but are also given freedom to act (Steinberg, 2014). To be effective youth and adult partnerships should shift from those based solely on “guidance, support and resources” to ones where “power is shared, mutual, and reciprocal” (Tanner & Arnett, 2009, p. 40). For mentorship to be effective contact between mentor and mentee must be consistent and take place at least once a week or more especially if a young person is considered at risk (Khanna et al., 2014).



YOUTH VOICE IN DECISION-MAKING

Consistent throughout the academic and grey literature as a leading practice is ensuring young people are meaningfully engaged in leadership and decision-making throughout their volunteer or service experience (*America's Service Commissions and Innovations in Civic Participation*, 2014; *Anderson et al.*, 2007; *Celio et al.*, 2011; *Dougherty & Clarke*, 2017a; *Hart et al.*, 2007; *McLean et al.*, 2017; *Quintelier*, 2008; *Roehlkepartain*, 2007a; *Shen*, 2005; *Wagner*, 2012). Opportunities for co-creation and involving youth in decision-making are particularly important when engaging indigenous (*4Rs Youth Movement*, n.d.; *Arellano et al.*, 2018; *Matthew*, 2009; *Monchalin et al.*, 2016) and official language minority young people (*Quebec Community Groups Network*, 2009). Successful programs “are designed in a manner that gives youth participants the ability to define the context of their participation and act as co-creators or partners in an activity that brings meaningful change to the participants (as individuals) and/or to the community the participants belong to” (*Riemer et al.*, 2013, p. 19).

Effectively engaging youth in decision-making necessitates embracing youth culture (*Helferty & Clarke*, 2009) and for adults to encourage creativity and difference even when young people choose to do things differently than they would (*Corrigan*, 2007). Youth service organizations as well as community partners might consider making structural changes so that youth voice is supported throughout the organization's governance structures (*Shen*, 2005; *Zeldin*, 2004). Engaging youth in decision-making can also take the form of young people creating their own projects or project plans (*Bourassa*, 2018).

The literature suggests that recognizing young people's abilities including their capacity for innovation is important (*Dougherty & Clarke*, 2017b). An example of the kind of framing that can promote this is City Year's belief that “young people in service can be powerful resources in addressing our nation's most pressing issues” (*Anderson et al.*, 2007, p. 1). A grey literature report explains the importance of young people feeling valued and not just a source of ‘cheap labour’ (*Shen*, 2005).

TIME FOR REFLECTION & LINKING SERVICE TO SYSTEMIC ISSUES AND LONG-TERM ACTION

Another recurring theme throughout the grey and academic literature is the importance of ensuring that youth service programs integrate time for reflection (*Bourassa, 2018; Celio et al., 2011; Jones & Hill, 2009; Mclean et al., 2017; McLellan & Youniss, 2003; Roehlkepartain, 2007a; Spano, 2003; We Charity, n.d.*) and encourage critical thinking (*Hosang, 2003; Riemer et al., 2013; Spano, 2003; We Charity, n.d.*). In particular encouraging young people to “think beyond their individual actions and consider the larger structural issues that have necessitated the volunteer work” and giving them “ample opportunities to reflect collectively on discouraging experiences” (*Seider et al., 2012, p. 450*).

Creating space to address power dynamics within organizations, amongst peers or within the community is also a leading practice. “Addressing power dynamics is a continual process of checking in with each other and changing strategies to ensure that the tensions that arise between people don’t

end up silencing some or making others feel excluded and unsafe” (*Skinner & French, 2012, p. 14*). In addition, grey and academic literature suggests that it is important that participants have an opportunity to understand the socio-political context of their work as well as exploring issues of individual privilege and identity (*Mclean et al., 2017; Plum & Jorgenson, 2012; Shen, 2005*). Throughout difficult conversations ensuring differences of opinion are respected and respectful conflict is not avoided allows young people to “develop understandings of conflict and change as necessary and legitimate to address issues of power” which is particularly important for marginalized young people (*Mclean et al., 2017, p. 95*).

Encouraging young people in the context of these conversations to consider what their longer term civic engagement might look like after they leave the youth service program may increase engagement (*Goldirova, 2015*). It also may be effective to encourage young people to think of the kinds of strategies they might employ once they leave the programs to continue to have impact on issues they care about (*Ho et al., 2015*).





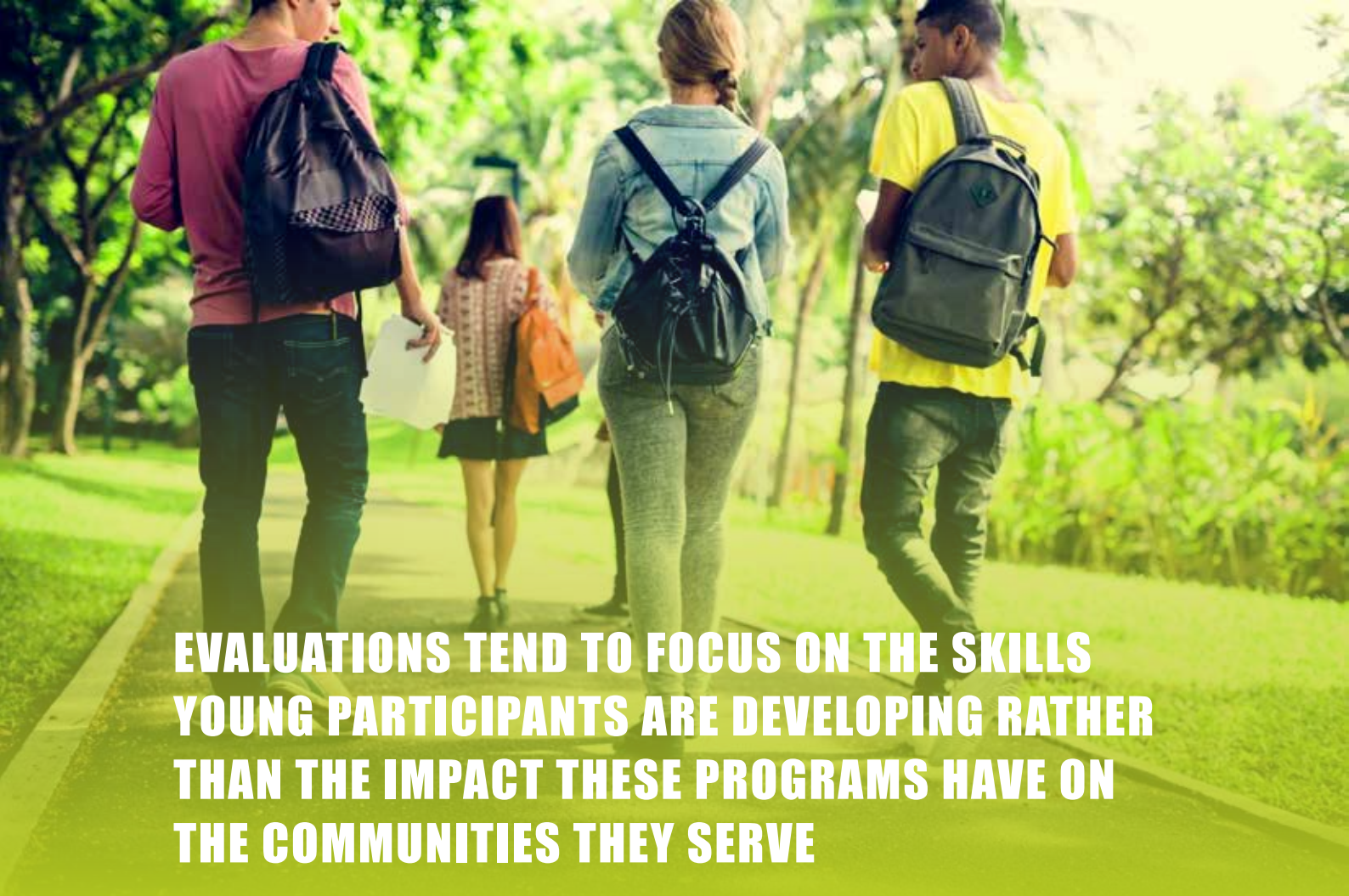
6.0 SOCIETAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF YOUTH SERVICE AND VOLUNTEERISM

In this section on societal and environmental impact we aim to answer the following questions:

- What are the leading theories and/or practices in youth service and volunteerism in Canada and internationally that result in positive societal and environmental impact?
- What do we know about the social impact (using monetary measures to measure impact) of youth service and volunteerism?

When it comes to understanding whether or not young service and volunteerism programs lead to positive societal and environmental impact concerns about the failure of program evaluation and research to measure these outcomes are discussed in the literature (*Pluim & Jorgenson, 2012; Powell & Bratovic, 2007; Tiessen & Heron, 2012; Zanchetta, Schwind,*

Aksenchuk, Gorospe, & Santiago, 2013). In particular, it is argued in a global review of civic service programs, that evaluations tend to focus on the skills young participants are developing rather than the impact these programs have on the communities they serve or more broadly on societal or environmental issues (*McBride et al., 2003*). As one academic article explains that “the impact of these programs is rarely measured in terms of poverty alleviation and improved quality of life. Rather, the impact is measured in terms of personal growth and skills development for the Canadian youth” (*Tiessen & Heron, 2012, p. 12*). Another academic article goes so far as to say “these programs continue to exist as a predominantly one-way exchange of people, ideas and benefits” (*Pluim & Jorgenson, 2012, p. 13*). Another academic article spoke about how the voices of civil society were not included by researchers in the program they



EVALUATIONS TEND TO FOCUS ON THE SKILLS YOUNG PARTICIPANTS ARE DEVELOPING RATHER THAN THE IMPACT THESE PROGRAMS HAVE ON THE COMMUNITIES THEY SERVE

study (Zanchetta *et al.*, 2013) and when young participants were asked to measure their own impact they were unsure how to do so and expressed “that they just had no way of measuring their impact” (Tiessen & Heron, 2012, p. 8).

That researchers and evaluators tend to focus on the skills or training a young person receives through an activity or program rather than the impact on society and the environment, was one of the findings of a study the Youth & Innovation Project conducted looking at a 35 year history of youth-led impact in Canada (Ho *et al.*, 2015). The resulting academic article recommended ensuring “that the impact a youth-led initiative has on society is also evaluated” (Ho *et al.*, 2015, p. 61). An academic article focused on developing and assessing youth-based environmental engagement programs further recommends “the aim of

environmental action should not solely be focused on the environmental outcome, nor the development of youth as citizens or change agents, but rather the integration of individual and community development through a systems approach” (Riemer *et al.*, 2013, p. 5).

Despite the lack of available research, during the course of the literature review some research which discusses the societal and environmental impact of youth service and volunteerism programs was reviewed and is outlined below.

6.1 TYPES OF SOCIETAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

IMPACTS ON YOUNG PARTICIPANTS

The impact of youth service and volunteerism that is most frequently evaluated is the impact on young participants themselves, which can be

considered a societal impact. The impacts of youth service programs on young participants are well documented in both the grey and academic literature.

Volunteering is linked to positive health outcomes in both the academic and grey literature (*Corporation For National & Community Service, 2008; Planty et al., 2006*), specifically improvements in mortality rates, mental health, well-being and physical health are documented (*Conference Board of Canada, 2018; Corporation For National & Community Service, 2008*). Volunteerism is also linked to less delinquency (*Planty et al., 2006*) and improved academic performance (*Planty et al., 2006; Roehlkepartain, 2007b*). In an academic article Canadian youth service program, Northern Youth Abroad found that participation in their program led to significant benefits in improved academic performance and career readiness amongst Inuit youth (*Aylward et al., 2015*). One academic study found that young people who

volunteered had an improved likelihood of completing high school (*Moorfoot, Leung, Toumbourou, & F. Catalano, 2015*) and an interviews with the Canadian youth service program Katimavik's alumni found they were more likely to continue their higher education than applicants who had not participated in the program (*R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd., 2006*). In a meta-analysis which looked at the impact of service-learning on students, a relatively high mean effect for academic performance was found (*Celio et al., 2011*). This outcome has also been found for young people who may be considered to be socioeconomically disadvantaged; one grey literature report concluded that when socioeconomically disadvantaged young people volunteer they gain a more positive outlook on their ability to succeed in further education (*Walsh & Black, 2015*). Findings however, are not consistent across the board, in one academic study on the AmeriCorp program "few statistically significant impacts were found for measures of participants' attitude toward education



or educational attainment” (*Frumkin et al.*, 2009, p. 394).

In the academic literature participants in youth service describe the positive impact the experience had on their personal growth (*Tiessen & Heron*, 2012). Youth service also builds self-esteem according to both grey and academic literature (*Celio et al.*, 2011; *Lakin & Mahoney*, 2006; *Ménard*, 2010; *Ramey et al.*, 2017).

Findings from both an alumni cohort study and the longitudinal study of the US program City Year suggest participants built social capital and social trust through their participation (*Anderson et al.*, 2007) and students who participate in service learning programs or who volunteer have shown to have stronger ties to their schools, their peers and their communities according to both academic and grey literature (*Lakin & Mahoney*, 2006; *Ménard*, 2010; *Planty et al.*, 2006).

Participant in youth service also indicate that they have developed leadership skills as a result of their participation (*Corporation For National & Community Service*, 2008) including an alumni study which

indicated that one year after completing the program alumni reported that the program had “contributed to their ability to work as part of a team (98 percent); lead others to complete a task (95 percent); work with people from diverse backgrounds (92 percent); speak in front of a group (83 percent); and critically analyze ideas and information (76 percent)” (*Anderson et al.*, 2007, p. 13). According to one Canadian program evaluation, youth service participants gained “relational and vocational assets, including communication skills, leadership and teamwork skills, increased self-confidence in what they have to contribute, and increased decision-making skills” (*Bourassa*, 2018, p. 34). A grey literature study of AmeriCorps found “statistically significant increases in [participants] work skills compared to the comparison group (*Corporation for National & Community Service*, 2004, p. 2).

There is no doubt that participating in youth service programs and volunteerism has a positive impact on the young participants when it comes to a variety of measures. However, results vary significantly between different



PARTICIPATING IN YOUTH SERVICE PROGRAMS AND VOLUNTEERISM HAS A POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE YOUNG PARTICIPANTS

programs, as one academic study on AmeriCorps explained “program design is a relevant factor in what skills, values, and experience participants gain from service” (*Frumkin et al.*, 2009, p. 413). The inconsistency of how results are measured and what is measured makes it difficult to come to conclusions about the benefits young participants derived from participating in youth service writ large.

FOSTERING TOLERANCE FOR DIVERSITY

Now that we have reviewed the literature regarding the impact of youth service and volunteerism on young participants we will turn our attention to the other impacts these programs have on society and the environment.

Academic and grey literature suggest that another societal impact that youth service programs produce is fostering tolerance for diversity. “Research shows that participation in service-learning programs increases students’ tolerance and favorable attitudes toward others (*Frumkin et al.*, 2009, p. 396). An evaluation of Teach for America shows an increase in “implicit black-white tolerance, as measured by an Implicit Association Test (IAT), by 0.8 standard

deviations. TFA service is also associated with statistically insignificant increases in explicit black-white tolerance and implicit white-Hispanic tolerance” (*Dobbie & Fryer Jr.*, 2015, p. 3). In the Canadian context, an evaluation of Katimavik found that the program resulted in “a greater sensitivity to the various regions, communities and cultures across Canada” (*R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd.*, 2006, p. i).

INCREASING CAPACITY OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

Another societal impact that youth service programs have is increasing the capacity of the civil society organizations that the young people are placed in during their service (*Roehlkepartain*, 2007a). In a study outlining the impacts of Katimavik “the majority of community partners also indicated that without participation in Katimavik their projects would have had not proceeded or proceeded with a reduced scope. In addition, most partners felt that the program helped their organization to meet its goals” and increased organizational capacity (*R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd.*, 2006, p. ii).

**YOUTH SERVICE PROGRAMS
INCREASE THE CAPACITY
OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY
ORGANIZATIONS**



IMPACTS OF INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS

Part of the difficulty of measuring the societal and environmental impact of youth service and volunteerism is the sheer variety of the kinds of service activities young people participate in (McLellan & Youniss, 2003).

In terms of volunteering, according to one Canadian poll of young people they tend to say they have participated in activities such as “organizing or supervising events and activities, canvassing or fundraising and teaching, educating or mentoring” (EnviroNics Institute, 2017, p. 52).

When it comes to youth service, in the context of the American college setting, “the three most popular types of community service and community service-learning for college students are tutoring K–12 youth, volunteering in soup kitchens and homeless shelters, and promoting sustainability and environmentalism” (Seider, Rabinowicz, & Gillmor, 2012, p. 448). In Canadian youth service program activities included delivering youth focused programming, mentoring

youth, advocating for youth interests and needs in the community, volunteering with local charities and non-profits and starting a company (Bourassa, 2018). In the context of another program that took place in a post-secondary institution students “service placements ranges from tutoring urban elementary school students to volunteering at a suicide hotline to helping low-income families apply for affordable housing” (Seider *et al.*, 2012, p. 449). In a review of 52 of the most innovative AmeriCorps programs activities included providing clothing, food, referrals and transportation to young clients, empowering adult and child survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault crimes, providing technology instruction to improve computer literacy, mobilizing local volunteers, matching young people with mentors, contributing to land and water based conservation projects, providing environmental leadership training for students, energy education and basic weatherization to low-income households (America’s Service





Commissions and Innovations in Civic Participation, 2014). The most common types of activities listed in that report were related to coaching, mentoring and tutoring students (*America's Service Commissions and Innovations in Civic Participation*, 2014).

A critique of the types of activities that young people tend to participate in as part of youth service programs was that they “promoted a politically indifferent volunteerism, encouraging youth participants to eschew issues like police brutality, toxic pollution, and educational discrimination in favor of community crime watches, neighborhood clean-ups, and after-school tutoring (*Hosang*, 2003, p. 5). Another Canadian academic article explains, “our study identified a clear gap between the systemic nature of the issues that youth identified as being interested in and the individual nature of the actions that they are currently engaging in (*Mclean et al.*, 2017, p. 103).

6.2 MONETARY MEASURES OF SOCIAL IMPACT

Of the few studies that we found that use monetary measures to measure the social impact of youth service and volunteerism all were grey literature. In 2018, the Conference Board of Canada found that “under conservative assumptions, the sizable work effort that Canadians put into volunteering would add nearly \$56 billion to GDP (in current dollars) in 2017. This represents about 2.6 per cent of Canada’s economic activity” (*Conference Board of Canada*, 2018, p. 6).

A 2006 study looking at the economic impact of Katimavik found that “the Katimavik program generates net positive returns based on the value of the volunteer labour and other induced economic benefits. Based on the average return, and utilizing community partners’ estimate of value of work, it appears that each dollar spent by the Katimavik program generates a return of \$2.20 in each community, or a net return of \$1.20” (*R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd.*, 2006, p. iii).



A report published by the Aspen Institute examined the economic benefits of National Service in the American context. This report mentioned that measuring economic value of National Service is difficult because “national service programs differ in their objectives, covering areas such as disaster services, economic opportunity, education, environmental stewardship, and health and support for veterans” (Belfield, 2013, p. 10) and because it is difficult to assign economic value to social gains (Belfield, 2013). This report measured economic benefits of national service by examining social costs and benefits as well as financial costs and benefits. In summary, this report iterates that “benefits exceed their costs by almost 2.7%” (Belfield, 2013, p. 7). According to this report, a 1-point increase in volunteering led to 0.192% decrease in unemployment and the report also suggests that there is a strong positive correlation between volunteering and higher income. Incomes of young volunteers aged 16-24 were higher than non-volunteers by 12% (Belfield, 2013).

In another grey literature report by Opportunity Nation focused its research on civic engagement and economic activity. This report suggests that volunteerism has an inverse relationship with income inequality; high rates of volunteerism correlated with low rates of income inequality (Opportunity Nation, 2014, p. 5). A grey literature report on civic health and unemployment found that “states and localities with more civic engagement in 2006 saw less growth in unemployment between 2006 and 2010. This was true even after adjusting for the economic factors that others have found to predict unemployment rates over this period” (National Conference on Citizenship, 2011). The authors of this report are careful to say however that this does not prove there is correlation between civic engagement and employment but rather the report is meant to encourage further study & discussion (National Conference on Citizenship, 2012).



6.3 LEADING THEORIES AND PRACTICES TO INCREASE SOCIETAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Now that we have summarized what limited literature there is on the societal and environmental impact of youth service and volunteerism, we examine strategies that may be worth considering if youth service and volunteerism programs hope to increase their societal and environmental impact.

MEASURE SOCIETAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The literature suggests that an important first step towards increasing the societal and environmental impact of youth service and volunteerism programs is taking the emphasis of evaluation and research off solely measuring the impacts of these programs on young participants and rather ensuring evaluation and research is more holistic and measures all intended outcomes including impact on the organizations and communities as well as broader societal and environmental impacts (*Ho et al., 2015; Pluim & Jorgenson, 2012; Powell & Bratovic, 2007; Riemer et al., 2013; Tiessen & Heron, 2012; Zanchetta et al., 2013*). Improving the quality of evaluations and research more generally to allow for better comparison across programs may also be helpful in this regard.

FOCUS ON STRATEGY

Another important means of amplifying the impact of youth volunteerism according to one academic article, especially given the short term nature of these interventions, is to ensure that community initiatives have clear achievable social and environmental goals (*Savan, Morgan, & Gore, 2003*). In addition, the Youth & Innovation Project's look at 35 years of youth-led impact in Canada found that focusing on the most effective strategies for addressing a societal or environmental problem such as awareness-raising (educational campaigns, artistic expression etc.), influence (youth indirectly affect social change) or power (activities in which youth directly affect change themselves) (*Clarke &*

Dougherty, 2010) or partnerships (cooperating with allies) was more important for impact than the duration of a given initiative (*Ho et al., 2015*). The same study also found 'political engagement' was often the kind of engagement where youth-led initiatives resulted in the most significant societal or environmental impact (*Ho et al., 2015*). A systemic approach to change, "analysing root causes and envisioning and enacting possible solutions" (*Riemer et al., 2013, p. 5*) might also be a valuable strategy.



ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE IN LEADERSHIP ROLES HAS ALSO BEEN SHOWN TO INCREASE IMPACT



7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS & INSIGHTS

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the literature reviewed the following are recommendations for future research and policy design:

Recommendation 1:

Employment and Social Development Canada should consider co-creating with young people a research program that focuses on better understanding how to engage young people as active citizens and changemakers, how to increase the social and environmental impact of youth focused programs and how to create a culture of service in Canada. High quality and methodically rigorous research developed through meaningful collaborations with young people, youth-serving organizations and communities should be prioritized. Areas of focus that should be considered as part of this program are:

- Developing methods for measuring the impact youth service programs have on communities and organizations, as well as the societal and environmental impact of these programs;
- Developing methods for measuring the social impact of Canadian youth service programs by monetary measures;
- Conducting research that focuses on cross program comparisons;
- Through collaborations with indigenous youth and researchers, understanding the additional barriers faced by, and realities of, indigenous young people in Canada and how youth service programs might contribute to reconciliation;
- Through collaborations with youth and researchers from underrepresented communities, understanding the additional barriers faced by, and realities of, young people from these communities and how to address them;
- Understanding what particular elements of youth service programs lead to positive outcomes (*Jones & Hill, 2009*), including further investigation of the leading practices outlined in this report;
- Measuring the topics, engagement types, organizational types, strategies (*Ho et al., 2015*) used by programs and the effectiveness of each in achieving societal and environmental impact; and
- Examining what is unique about the contributions young people make to the societal and environmental outcomes during the course of youth service and volunteerism.



Recommendation 2:

Employment and Social Development Canada should consider using evidence based frameworks that promote healthy youth development as part of the Canada Service Corps logic model. For example autonomy, relatedness, competency and purpose driven impact (*Dougherty & Clarke, 2017a; Khanna et al., 2014*) is one such model that should be considered.

Recommendation 3:

Employment and Social Development Canada should consider ensuring that the Canada Service Corps logic model includes a focus on the positive societal and environmental outcomes, and by extension the impacts of this program on communities and organizations, as well as the impacts of on young participants.

Recommendation 4:

Employment and Social Development Canada should consider including a commitment to intergenerational partnerships and the inclusion of youth voice in decision-making as central components of the Canada Service Corps logic model.



INSIGHTS

Based on the literature reviewed the following are insights for program delivery that are relevant for Employment and Social Development Canada to consider:

Insight 1:

Employment and Social Development Canada should consider, given the increasing instability and financial challenges that young Canadians are facing in their day to day lives, examining the feasibility of providing financial or educational incentives to facilitate participation of underrepresented young people in youth service programs. Young people should be consulted as to which incentives would best suit their needs.

Insight 2:

Building on current successful strategies being already being implemented by partners, Employment and Social Development Canada should consider encouraging program partners to continue to innovate their recruitment strategies to ensure that young people, especially those who are less likely to get involved, are asked to get involved by a trusted mentor or peer, ideally in person, rather than expecting these young people to seek out programs.

Insight 3:

Employment and Social Development Canada should consider collaborating with adjacent youth focused sectors - including those working on youth employment, in education and encouraging youth entrepreneurship - in order to provide coordinating support to young people both while they are participating in youth service and volunteerism and afterward. Other sectors that may also be relevant to collaborate with include settlement agencies, youth in care and mental health.



Insight 4:

Employment and Social Development Canada should consider prioritizing the integration of the leading practices outlined in this report that contribute to young people engaging as changemakers and active citizens in the design of the next phase of the Canada Service Corps:

- Connecting volunteer or service projects to young people's interests;
- Ensuring the work young people do meets real needs and that young people are given the opportunity to take meaningful action during a volunteer or service experience;
- Ensuring strong community partnerships and engagement, and that young people connect with decision-makers during a volunteer or service experience;
- Ensuring respectful intergenerational partnerships and mentorship are prioritized during a volunteer or service experience;
- Ensuring young people are meaningfully engaged in leadership and decision-making throughout their volunteer or service experience; and
- Ensuring that youth service and volunteerism programs integrate time for reflection and that these conversations are linked to systemic issues and long-term action.

8.0 CONCLUSION

As we pulled together the research for this report, it was reassuring to see how the research regarding how to best support young people's healthy youth development echoes much of the research about how to best support young people to engage as changemakers and citizens. When we give young people voice, engage them in real meaningful work that matters to them and that has an impact, prioritize community partnerships and engagement, encourage intergenerational partnerships, value young people's unique abilities and ensure young people connect their experiences to systemic issues and longer term action, we will be ensuring young people are healthier and that they are more likely to be lifelong changemakers and active citizens. By meaningfully engaging young people we are also more likely to find and implement solutions to the pressing social and environmental challenges we all face.

Youth service and volunteerism has positive benefits, but there is no doubt that improvements can be made to ensure that the next phase of the Canada Service Corps reaches all Canadian youth, and that it increases the positive impacts it has on young participants, our communities and our country. More research is needed, but many insights can be gathered from the current body of knowledge. We hope that this report offers a clear road map for both policy makers, researchers and practitioners.



**BY MEANINGFULLY
ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE
WE ARE ALSO MORE LIKELY
TO FIND AND IMPLEMENT
SOLUTIONS TO THE
PRESSING SOCIAL AND
ENVIRONMENTAL
CHALLENGES WE ALL FACE.**



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PHOTO CREDITS

Envato Elements	Cover	Christina Wocintechchat (Unsplash)	36
Dimitri Houtteman (Unsplash)	4	Envato Elements	37
Linkedin Sales Navigator (Unsplash)	5	Charles Deloye (Unsplash)	38
Phil Coffman (Unsplash)	6	Envato Elements	39
Envato Elements	8	Violet Manuel/The Tyee	40
Envato Elements	10	George Coletrain (Unsplash)	41
University of Waterloo Library. Special Collections & Archives. Waterloo Photos	12	Max Bender (Unsplash)	42
Nima Latifpour. Photo of Youth & Innovation Project Youth Advisory Council members. July 2019	13	Envato Elements	43
Christina Wocintechchat (Unsplash)	14	Envato Elements	44
Matthew Henry (Burst)	15	Right To Play via Facebook	45
Nima Latifpour. Photo of Youth & Innovation Project Youth Advisory Council members. July 2019	17	Linkedin Sales Navigator (Unsplash)	46
Austin Kehmeier (Unsplash)	18	Envato Elements	47
University of Waterloo Library. Special Collections & Archives. Waterloo Photos	19	Envato Elements	48
Christina Wocintechchat (Unsplash)	20	Envato Elements	49
Ian Scargill (Unsplash)	21	Shelby Lisk/The Globe and Mail	50
Nicolas J Leclercq (Unsplash)	23	Matthew Henry (Burst)	51
Envato Elements	24	Yogendra Singh (Unsplash)	52
Envato Elements	25	Alexis Brown (Unsplash)	53
Annie Spratt (Unsplash)	26	Indigenous Climate Action via Facebook	54
Envato Elements	27	Envato Elements	55
Wonderlane (Unsplash)	28	Outside Looking In/The Globe and Mail	56
Richard Yim	29	Melissa Tait/The Globe and Mail	57
Makers (Unsplash)	30	Linkedin Sales Navigator (Unsplash)	58
Envato Elements	31	Autumn Peltier UN Photo/Manuel Elias/The Associated Press	59
YMCA Academy via Facebook	32	Chuttersnap (Unsplash)	60
Envato Elements	35	Envato Elements	61
		Envato Elements	62



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