

Evaluation of the Youth Employment Centre

Findings Synthesis

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Evaluation of the Youth Employment Centre – Findings Synthesis

Introduction

Established in 2011, the Youth Employment Centre (YEC) is a program of the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre. Located in Whitehorse, Yukon, it provides employment-related services to eligible Yukon youth between the ages of 15 to 30 to assist them to access the Yukon labour force.

The primary objectives of the Youth Employment Centre are to:

- reduce barriers to young Aboriginal engagement in the workforce; and,
- help all youth - through tailored support and training on an individual basis - to develop the necessary skills to successfully gain and maintain meaningful employment.

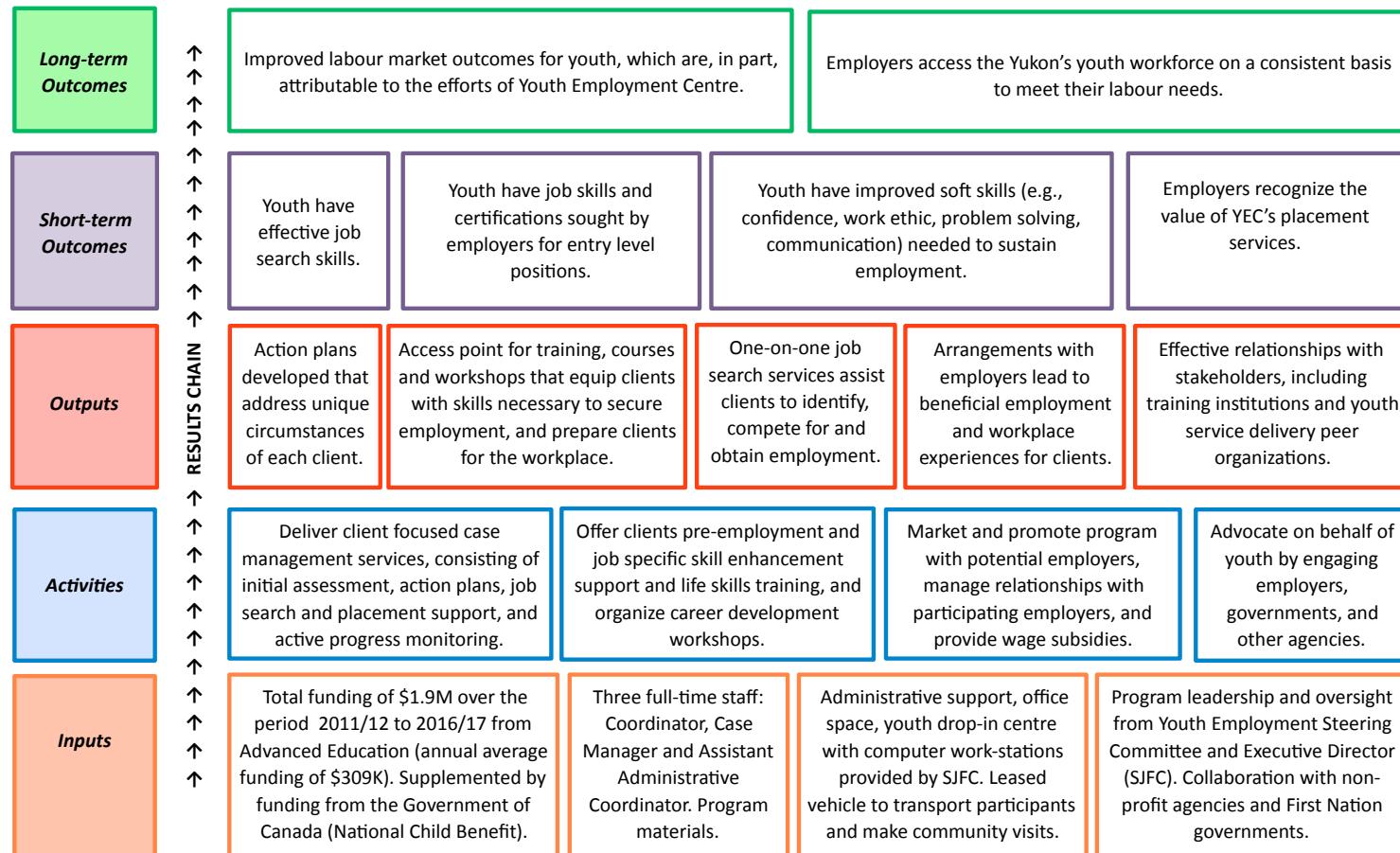
While YEC programming is available to all Yukon youth, support and advocacy efforts are focused on youth *at-risk*. The youth *at-risk* cohort includes young people who may have been traumatized, who may have lost hope, and who may no longer have the inner strength to see their individual worth. YEC provides a variety of employment-related services and supports to Yukon youth:

- job search/job matching tools, services and resources;
- administrative support (such as resume development);
- a drop-in centre with access to a computer lab, fax machine, photocopier and phone;
- career development workshops covering topics such as resume / cover letter writing, interview preparation and job search strategies;
- meaningful three month paid/subsidized work placements;
- job-related training;
- provision of work-related gear;
- life skills training (for example, Dealing with Grief, Budgeting/How To Stretch Your Money); and,
- case management (including referrals to other agencies, if appropriate) with onsite youth employment coordinators.

This report presents the findings of a summative evaluation of the Youth Employment Centre's first 6 years of operations undertaken in the last quarter of 2016 by Vector Research, in collaboration with Westropp Management Consulting. The evaluation examines the extent to which the intended outcomes of the Youth Employment Centre have been achieved. The evaluation also provides information and direction as to how the Youth Employment Centre can most effectively provide meaningful/relevant services for youth clientele, while meeting the needs of the Yukon government funder as well as the mission and values of the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre Society.

The logic model contained in the March 2016 Evaluation Plan for the Youth Employment Centre was updated for the summative evaluation, as were the accompanying evaluation matrix and data collection instruments. The updated logic model, matrix and instruments were reviewed and approved by the evaluation steering committee in October 2016. The logic model is presented on the next page.

Youth Employment Centre – Logic Model



Achievement of the intended outcomes of the Youth Employment Centre was evaluated using multiple lines of evidence, including:

- a review and analysis of financial data and administrative documents (including job descriptions);
- a web-based survey of program participants (n=36);
- a roundtable with program participants, facilitated by BYTE (n=6);
- semi-structured interviews (n=25) with:
 - five former and current SJFC staff members;
 - an elder serving on the Youth Employment Steering Committee;
 - 11 program stakeholders, including representatives of organizations also delivering employment services in Whitehorse as well as officials from Yukon Education; and,
 - eight employers (including one who did not participate in the program).

Youth Employment Centre Inputs

The Youth Employment Centre is funded mainly via a transfer payment agreement with the Yukon Department of Education. As shown in the table to the right, funding provided by Yukon Education totalled \$1,900,687 over the 2010/11 to 2016/17 period. On an annual basis from 2011/12 to 2016/17, Youth Employment Centre funding averaged \$309,307 per year. Supplemental funding was also obtained from the Government of Canada's National Child Benefit initiative.

The employment-related services and supports are delivered by three staff consisting of a Coordinator, a Case Manager and an Assistant Coordinator. The Coordinator reports to the Executive Director of the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre (SJFC). The Skookum Jim Friendship Centre provides administrative support, office space, and a youth drop-in centre with computer work stations, reference library with materials for conducting job searches, information and applications for post-secondary and trades institutions, a job board, and information related to housing and temporary shelter, and other programs and services for youth at-risk. The drop-in centre's hours of operation are weekdays from 8:30am to 4:30pm.

Program funding is also used to lease a vehicle to transport program participants and to deliver programming in Yukon communities. Program leadership and oversight is provided by the Youth Employment Steering Committee and the Executive Director of the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre. The Youth Employment Centre collaborates with several non-profit agencies delivering life skills seminars and employment readiness training in Whitehorse.

Youth Employment Centre Funding from Yukon Education	
2010/11	\$44,844
2011/12	\$300,000
2012/13	\$303,034
2013/14	\$307,000
2014/15	\$314,287
2015/16	\$311,444
2016/17	\$320,078
Total (2010/11 to 2016/17)	\$1,900,687
Annual Average (2011/12 to 2016/17)	\$309,307

Source: Skookum Jim Friendship
Centre and Yukon Education
(Transfer Payment Agreement).

Youth Employment Centre Activities

As outlined in the table below, all of the activities necessary to implement Youth Employment Centre programming were carried out as planned.

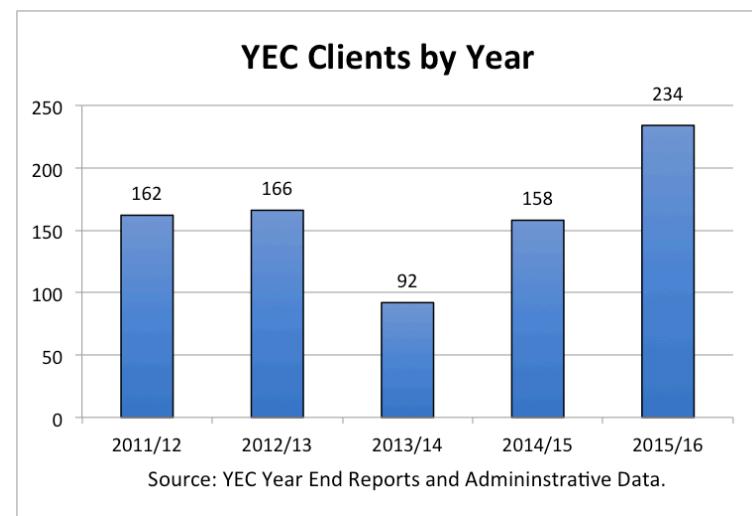
Activity	Was the activity carried out as planned?
Deliver client focused case management services, consisting of initial assessment, action plans, job search and placement support, and active progress monitoring.	yes
Offer clients pre-employment and job specific skill enhancement support and life skills training, and organize career development workshops.	yes
Market and promote program with potential employers, manage relationships with participating employers, and provide wage subsidies.	yes
Advocate on behalf of youth by engaging employers, First Nations, governments, and other agencies.	yes

Over the period 2011/12 to 2015/16, the Youth Employment Centre provided employment related services to a total of 812 youth. As shown in the chart to the right, the highest number of clients served in a single year was 234 in 2015/16 and the lowest number of clients served in a single year was 92 in 2013/14. On average over the five year period, 162 youth received employment-related services each year.

Skookum Jim Friendship Centre staff also track the number of visits to the Youth Employment Centre. As shown in the table to the left, the number of instances of YEC staff contact with youth (at the Youth Employment Centre or during community outreach efforts) ranged from 520 in the first year of operations to a high of 1,474 in 2014/15. The number of instances of YEC staff contact with youth averaged 966 per year over the 2011/12 to 2015/16 period.

Year	Count
2011/12	520
2012/13	445
2013/14	1,184
2014/15	1,474
2015/16	1,205
Average	966

Source: Skookum Jim Friendship Centre.



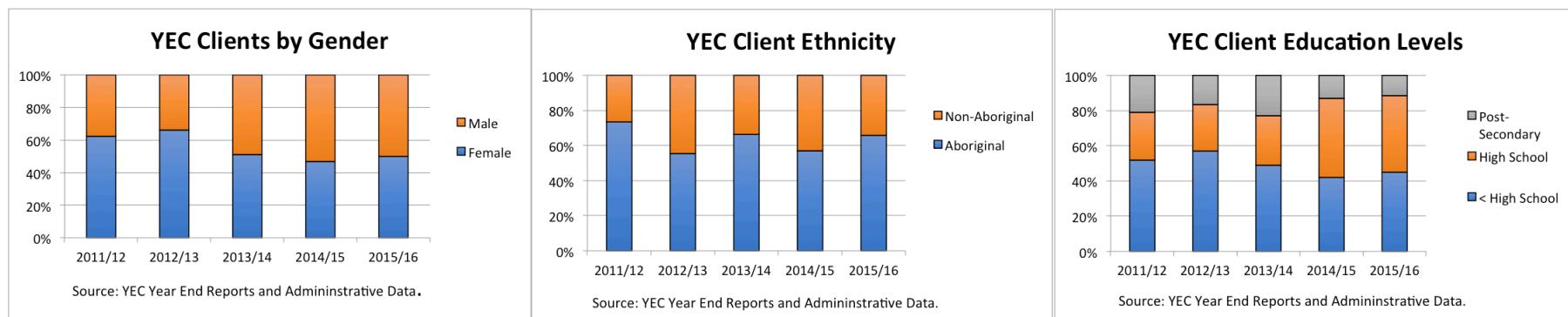
The Youth Employment Centre also delivers services to youth in Yukon communities outside of Whitehorse. A robust data series describing the location and frequency of communities visited by YEC staff was not available.

Evaluation of the Youth Employment Centre – Findings Synthesis

The series of charts below present a demographic profile of Youth Employment Centre participants. In terms of gender, slightly more than half (56%) of Youth Employment Centre clients over the 2011/12 to 2015/16 period were female and slightly less than half were male (44%).

In terms of client ethnicity, two thirds (64%) of Youth Employment Centre clients over the 2011/12 to 2015/16 period self-reported as being of aboriginal ethnicity and one third (36%) self-reported as being of non-aboriginal ethnicity.

In terms of education levels, half (49%) of Youth Employment Centre clients over the 2011/12 to 2015/16 period indicated having achieved an education level of less than high school, one third (35%) indicated having achieved an education level of high school. The remaining 16% of Youth Employment Centre clients indicated educational achievement at the post-secondary level.



Youth Employment Centre Outputs

Action plans developed that address unique circumstances of each client.

Individuals seeking assistance from the Youth Employment Centre are required to complete a client intake form that is integrated with a client action plan. The seven-page intake/action plan asks for demographic, educational attainment and employment history information. The form also asks about employment goals and perceived barriers to employment and outlines the types of assistance to be provided by the Youth Employment Centre to help overcome the barriers identified. A review of selected client files indicated that client intake/action plan forms are being completed on a consistent basis and are specific to the unique circumstances of each client.

Evaluation of the Youth Employment Centre – Findings Synthesis

The Youth Employment Centre is currently revising its intake/action plan form to make the intake process less onerous for new clients, as lengthy intake forms are intimidating. Several stakeholder interviewees noted that if a new client is unable to complete the form in one sitting, it is unlikely they return to complete the form. The preferred intake process used by some employment service agencies in Whitehorse sees the case manager sit down with a new client to work through the form to ensure accuracy and to begin fostering the trust necessary for discussions of the personal barriers potentially affecting a client which are then addressed in a personalized action plan.

A paper-based case management approach is used at the Youth Employment Centre to guide the implementation of client action plans. During interviews with staff and other employment agencies, a number of challenges were noted to exist with a paper based system in terms of sharing client information among staff (particularly if a staff member is absent leaving other staff to search paper files to retrieve client information), updating client information as milestones are achieved or identify changes as plans are revised, and closing a client file upon completion of the action plan. The introduction of a computerized case management system would likely enhance the provision of youth employment-related services and supports to Yukon youth and enhance the collection of program data.

A web-based labour market application – Genie – is available from Yukon Education. Adoption of a centralized client management system such as Genie would likely contribute to more effective and efficient service delivery. As noted by an interview participant, however, ownership of the information contained in Genie resides outside the organization and is accessible by the Yukon government. Although Genie enables the sharing of client information with other labour market delivery agencies, clearly a benefit where several agencies are involved in the delivery of services to one client, the use of Genie is not seen by all to be an appropriate case management solution for Yukon youth.

Access point for training, courses and workshops that equip clients with skills necessary to secure employment, and prepare clients for the workplace.

On the basis of administrative data available for only the first year of operations, an extensive variety of training, courses and workshops were delivered to youth at that time. The training, courses and workshops were of two general types, life skills and job-specific. Examples of life skills type courses include:

- Government Job Hunting Do's and Don'ts
- Budgeting & Consumerism
- Banking & Credit
- Self-Esteem Building
- Resume Writing
- Cover Letter Writing
- Problem Solving
- Managing Workplace Conflict
- Asserting Yourself in Conflict Situations
- Problem Solving
- Healthy Relationships

Evaluation of the Youth Employment Centre – Findings Synthesis

Examples of job-specific certifications include:

- Standard First Aid and Recertification
- Wilderness First Aid
- Fall Protection
- Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System
- Food Safe (Level I and II)
- Be a Responsible Server
- H₂S Alive
- Chainsaw Safety
- Traffic Control
- Early Childhood Education Level I
- Excel Level I
- Simply Accounting Level I
- Air Brake Training
- Rigging and Hoisting

Interviews with program staff indicate that since the first year of Youth Employment Centre Operations, offerings of training, courses and workshops has shifted away from life skills type courses as demand has fallen off. Two reasons were offered by interview respondents for the apparent declining interest in life skills type courses. First, the wide range of eligible ages for Youth Employment Centre Services (15 to 30) could mean that participants in the same course or workshop might have markedly different life experiences and maturity levels, resulting in some discomfort for all participants. Second, apathy on the part of youth participants in general seems to be resulting in higher rates of "no-shows" for training, course and workshops arranged and hosted by the Youth Employment Centre.

One-on-one job search services assist clients to identify, compete for and obtain employment.

The shift away from the delivery of life skills type training, courses and workshops for groups of participants appears to have been accompanied by an increased focus on one-on-one job search services. As noted in the 2013/14 annual report prepared by Youth Employment Centre staff for the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre Board of Directors:

"We have found that for us, the most effective way to assist youth is by offering personalized one-on-one career development guidance including: career assessments, training plans, and life skills coaching...in addition to basic job search services such as: resume and cover letter writing and interview preparation." (page 2)

Stakeholder Interviews revealed that other employment service agencies are also moving away from life skill development in group settings in favour of one-on-one mentorship and guidance based on a relationship built on trust between the client and caseworker. As a stakeholder interviewee explained: *'We found that no one size fits all and that running a group life skills session was not effective for the youth age group as those who know a fair bit don't want to sit through a session with those who don't. Instead, we have found that individualized interactions are far more effective since we can target the specific areas the client needs to work on, like, for example, how to talk to a potential employer.'*

Evaluation of the Youth Employment Centre – Findings Synthesis

Additional examples of one-on-one assistance delivered to youth clients at the Youth Employment Centre include:

- work gear, clothing and safety equipment;
- information on apartments and emergency shelter in Whitehorse (i.e. name, type, location, landlord, landlord contact information);
- bus routes and schedules;
- rides to work locations beyond bus routes to deliver resumes and participate in interviews;
- information on applying to a range of post-secondary institutions, some with a focus on Aboriginal programming;
- access to application forms for related programs delivered by other service providers (i.e. Challenge);
- schedules and promotional materials for other programs such as Traditional Parenting Program;
- referrals to other services
- resource bookshelf with education and job search documents;
- printer, fax and phone; and,
- computers with internet access for job searches.

Youth Employment Centre Participant Work Supplies	
2011/12	\$4,826
2012/13	\$5,635
2013/14	\$7,627
2014/15	\$9,027
2015/16	\$4,528
Total	\$31,643
Annual Average	\$6,329

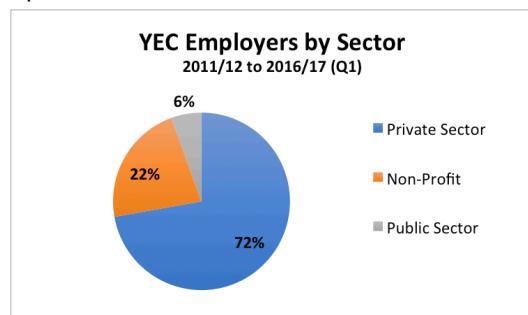
Source: Skookum Jim Friendship Centre.

Arrangements with employers lead to beneficial employment and workplace experiences for clients.

Over the period 2011/12 to 2016/17 (Q1), a total of 54 distinct employers have hired youth through the Youth Employment Centre and have been eligible to receive the \$10 per hour wage subsidy for three months.

In total, 86 work placements were secured for Yukon youth during the 2011/12 to 2016/17 (Q1) time period.

Out of the 54 employers that hired youth workers, 89% are currently operating and 11% have ceased to operate.



For the period that financial data was available (2011/12 to 2014/15), employer wage subsidies totalled \$165,445. With 64 work placements over the corresponding period, the average value of a youth employee wage subsidy was \$2,585 over the 2011/12 to 2014/15 period.

As shown in the chart to the left, almost three quarters of youth work placements were with private sector employers. Twenty-two percent of placements were with employers in the non-profit sector. The remaining 6% of youth job placements were with public sector employers, all of whom were First Nation governments. No work placements were secured with the Yukon or federal governments, municipalities or unincorporated communities. A robust data series describing work placements in communities outside of Whitehorse was not available.

Youth Employment Centre Employer Wage Subsidy	
2011/12	\$9,926
2012/13	\$58,842
2013/14	\$49,424
2014/15	\$47,253
Total	\$165,445
No. of Placements (2011/12 to 2014/15)	64
Average per Placement (2011/12 to 2014/15)	\$2,585

Source: Skookum Jim Friendship Centre.

Evaluation of the Youth Employment Centre – Findings Synthesis

Several employer interview participants noted that constant contact with both the youth employee and the employer throughout a work placement period is a contributor to the success of a work placement. As noted by an interviewee managing an employment program: "*A key is follow-up. The employer doesn't want to feel that they have taken a employee on and been forgotten by the agency. There has to be that contact. As issues arise, you have to work with employer/employee together on resolving issues. It's a teaching experience for both, but primarily for the employee. The employee is learning how to communicate with the employer.*"

Informal mentoring – going for lunch or coffee with Youth Employment Centre clients to check in and ask how things are going – was also suggested by an employer interview participant as useful approach to bolstering the success of youth in work placements. Ideally, the employer has the confidence to approach the employer to discuss concerns, and the employer will be open to working through issues with the employee. In situations where bolstering client confidence will have a positive impact on the success of the work placement, YEC staff have an important role to play by serving as a "mentoring bridge" between the employee and employer. The role of mentoring bridge should continue as a primary focus of Youth Employment Centre staff.

Close and regular contact with the employer will also allow the Youth Employment Centre to ensure that youth both feel safe in work placements and that the goals of the employer are aligned with Youth Employment Centre objectives. While responses from the online youth survey indicate that youth employees generally felt safe at their work placements, an example was encountered in the course of the evaluation of an employee being asked by an employer to do something they considered unsafe. In terms of aligning employer goals with program objectives, a repeat employer suggested that the employer vetting process could be strengthened to ensure good alignment.

Several of the employers interviewed noted the importance of a youth employee having the basic skills needed to perform the functions of a particular placement. While the roles and responsibilities associated with a placement should align with the interests of the youth employee, the personal suitability of the employee to master the required tasks is a relevant consideration. As one interviewee noted: "*Screening is really important. If the job requires working with a cash register, you can't place someone who is incapable of working with numbers or afraid to deal with people.*" It is important, therefore, for Youth Employment Centre staff to ascertain the strengths (and weaknesses) of clients prior to placing them with an employer.

Effective relationships with stakeholders, including training institutions and youth service delivery peers.

To sum up the sentiments of several interview respondents, if the state of the Youth Employment Centre's relationships with stakeholders could be described in terms of ebbs and flows, the overall state of stakeholder relationships is currently at an ebb. The Yukon is replete with an extensive number of publically funded social enterprises and not-for-profit organizations with youth-related mandates. It is no small feat to both stay fully in the loop on who's who in the stakeholder realm and at the same time deliver services to youth clients. Indeed, as illustrated in the table below, there are no fewer than 32 agencies and organizations currently with some stake, from a sliver to primary focus, in the delivery of employment-related services to Yukon youth.

Yukon Agencies and Organizations with Some Measure of a Youth Employment Mandate

- Boys and Girls Club
- BYTE – Empowering Youth
- Canada Job Bank
- Challenge – HUB
- Computers for Schools
- CYFN – FN Job Fund/Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS)
- Employment Central
- Futurpreneur Canada
- Individual Learning Centre
- Integrated Supports for Youth (HSS)
- Klondike Outreach (Dawson City)
- KDFN House of Learning
- Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon (LDAY)
- Skills Canada
- Teegatha'Oh Zheh
- TKC Income Assistance Reform (Enhanced Service Delivery)
- Watson Lake Community Outreach
- YG Grad Corps (PSC)
- YG Head Start Program (HSS)
- YG Health and Social Services Employment Services
- YG Student Training and Employment Program (STEP)
- YG Yukon Summer Career Placement (Education)
- YG Workplace Diversity Employment Office
- Youth Achievement Centre
- Yukon Association for Community Living
- Yukon College
- Yukon First Nation Employment Training Officers/ASETS
- Yukon Learn
- Yukon Literacy Coalition
- Yukon Mine Training Association
- Yukon Women in Trades and Technology
- YUWIN

It is important to recognize, however, that Yukon youth will benefit from any advice that can help them navigate the myriad of employment-related services available to them. As such, all efforts to monitor and nurture relationships with the agencies and organizations involved in the delivery of youth-related employment programming in the Yukon brings potential benefit to Yukon youth through improved interagency coordination to clients. Possible connection points for interagency coordination that could potentially benefit youth include:

- job fairs at Kwanlin Dun First Nation's House of Learning;
- summer employment boot-camp at Kwanlin Dun First Nation's House of Learning (eight safety-related courses in one month);
- computer training at Yukon Learn; and,
- short-term course and training through the First Nation Job Fund administered by the Ta'an Kwach'an Council and the Council for Yukon First Nations (for indigenous youth aged 15 – 24 who receive social assistance).

Evaluation of the Youth Employment Centre – Findings Synthesis

While job coaching is not currently part of the mix of services provided by the Youth Employment Centre, employers familiar with other employment placement services in Whitehorse touted the benefits of job coaching. For example, both Challenge and the Yukon Association of Community Living use job coaching for their placement programs. Each employee is assigned a job coach for the duration of the placement who is responsible for working with the employee to learn the position's responsibilities and to work through issues, either personal or work related, as they surface during the placement. The job coach service reduces the burden on the employee's supervisor and increases the likelihood that the employee will complete the placement and earn a permanent position with the employer.

A variety of support services are also delivered to youth in Yukon which, while not directly employment-related, are in some part intended to help them prepare for employment opportunities. Examples of agencies and organizations which deliver such services include: Blood Ties Four Directions, FASSY, Second Opinion Society, Services to Persons with Disabilities, Supported Independent Living, Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, Youth Justice, Yukon Learn and the Yukon Literacy Coalition. A continued awareness of the support services focused on employment, health, justice and life skills support and the potential for partnerships will also bring potential benefits to Yukon youth.

Youth Employment Centre Short-term Outcomes

Youth have effective job search skills.

As illustrated in the table to the right, a total of 86 youth were placed in jobs through the Youth Employment Centre from its inception in 2011/12 to Q1 of 2016/17. On average over the years 2011/12 to 2015/16, 14 youth received job placements. Average wages for youth workers ranged from a low of \$12.01 in 2014/15 to a high of \$15.36 in 2013/14.

A web-based survey was completed to learn about the experiences of youth who received services from the Youth Employment Centre. Invitations to participate in the survey were sent to approximately 200 email addresses supplied by the Youth Employment Centre. A total of 36 surveys were completed with 67% of respondents indicating that the help they obtained at Skookum Jim's led to a job.

In terms of the respondent profile, the average age of respondents was 23 years. Of the respondents who indicated their ethnicity, 79% indicated aboriginal ancestry and 21% indicated non-aboriginal ancestry. Sixty-one percent of respondents were female and 39% were male. Most respondents (94%) were living in Whitehorse when they accessed employment services from the Youth Employment Centre, with the remaining 6% indicating they were living in a Yukon community outside of Whitehorse.

YEC – Number of Placements and Average Wages

	Number of Placements	Average Wage
2011/12	8	n/a
2012/13	22	\$14.75
2013/14	10	\$15.36
2014/15	24	\$12.01
2015/16	13	\$12.98
2016/17 (Q1)	9	\$14.86
Total (2011/12 to 2016/17)	86	
Annual Average (2011/12 to 2015/16)	14	

Source: Skookum Jim Friendship Centre.

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Survey respondents were asked to indicate, overall, how helpful the job search assistance received at Skookum Jim's was for them. In aggregate (n=36), survey respondents rated the helpfulness of job search assistance received at 8.3 on a one to 10 point scale.

Survey respondents were also asked to indicate their level of agreement about whether they know the steps to follow to get a job as a result of receiving employment services at Skookum Jim's. In aggregate (n=36), survey respondents indicated their level of agreement at 7.3 on a one to 10 point scale.

"Because of the people at Skookum Jim's, I know the steps to follow to get a job." 1 2 3 4 5 6 7.3 8 9 10

I do not agree at all I agree very strongly

Youth have job skills and certifications sought by employers for entry level positions.

Forty position titles were identified in Youth Employment Centre reporting documents covering the period 2011/12 to 2016/17 (Q1). As illustrated in the table below, Yukon youth were employed in a diverse variety of positions suggesting that, overall, a viable pathway to beneficial workplace experiences has been established by Yukon Employment Centre programming for Yukon youth.

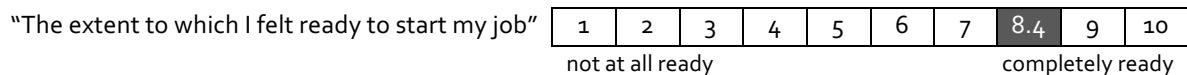
Youth Employment Centre – Work Placement Job Titles

- Administrative Assistant
 - Advertising Representative
 - Apprentice Carpenter
 - Apprentice Electrician
 - Assistant
 - Assistant Caregiver
 - Assistant Program
 - Bookkeeper/Office
 - Busser
 - Camp Attendant
 - Caregiver
 - Dance Camp Counselor
 - Dance Coordinator
 - Finance/Administrator
 - Front Counter Staff Person
 - Graphic Design Intern
 - Heavy Duty Technician
 - Home Support Worker Trainee
 - Hostess
 - Intern
 - Junior Esthetician
 - Kitchen Help
 - Labourer
 - Phone Repair Technician
 - Planter Box Maintenance Worker
 - Postal Clerk
 - Prep-Cook & Cashier
 - Production/Cultural Centre
 - Receptionist
 - Retail Associate
 - Sales Associate
 - Salon Assistant
 - Sheet Metal Labourer
 - Summer Student
 - Waitress
 - Woodshop Production Worker
 - Workshop Coordinator
 - Yard Caretaker/Materials
 - Youth Centre Assistant
 - Youth Worker

In general, the job titles listed above confirm the entry-level nature of the work placements arranged by the Youth Employment Centre. While many of the work placements do not require specific credentials, several positions do require certifications, such as, for example, first aid, food safe or fall protection. While administrative data detailing course access by Youth Employment Centre clients over the 2011/12 to 2016/17 time horizon was not available, interviews with employers who hired youth with the assistance of the Youth Employment Centre indicated that, in general, youth employees were adequately prepared in terms of certifications needed to start the job.

Evaluation of the Youth Employment Centre – Findings Synthesis

A total of 24 youth survey respondents stated that the help they received at Skookum Jim's led them to a job. When asked to indicate on a scale ranging from one to 10 the extent to which they felt ready to start their job, respondents reported, in aggregate, a readiness level of 8.4.



Youth have the soft skills (e.g., confidence, work ethic, problem solving, communication) needed to sustain employment.

Much of what new labour market entrants need to know about the specifics of a job, to be successful in the job, is learned on the job. Employers are well aware that on-the job training is a necessary and key part of the success of young employees. In general, however, employers are less sure whether it is reasonable to expect them to train youth employees in the so-called "soft skills" such as confidence, work ethic, problem solving and communication.

By way of illustration, a Whitehorse employer with long-term experience in hiring youth suggested that "it's now rarer to find young employees who aren't afraid to ask for help, who would agree 'there are no stupid questions'....something has changed and that's too bad because it's the employees that ask questions who have success on the job." More than one employer interview participant confirmed that arriving at work on time is crucial from an employer perspective.

Many youth, however, face a myriad of barriers that can delay or impede the achievement of the soft skills needed for success on the job. All lines of evaluation evidence surfaced examples of employment barriers faced by Yukon youth. A consolidation of barriers identified is listed in the table below:

Identified Youth Employment Barriers

- acquired / developmental brain injuries
 - addictions and substance abuse
 - childcare
 - computer skills
 - confidence
 - cultural barriers
 - limited support at home to go to school
 - few employers in communities
 - generational use of social assistance
 - homelessness
 - difficulty navigating: school, goal setting, training
 - individuals with unidentified barriers
 - language skills
 - lateral violence
 - learning disabilities
 - literacy
 - mental health and mental illness
 - mistrust of the education system
 - non-academic graduation
 - physical disabilities
 - racism
 - transportation
 - trauma
 - trust for other cultures

Evaluation of the Youth Employment Centre – Findings Synthesis

The challenges faced by Yukon youth are not specific to the Yukon. The interim report tabled in December 2016 by the Expert Panel on Youth Employment, *Understanding the Realities of Youth Employment in Canada*, contains a finding that some young people face complex and varied employment barriers:

"For some youth, finding employment is more complicated than just needing to work on soft-skills. Many young people are dealing with complex barriers like homelessness, experience with the criminal justice system, food insecurity, young children, the effects of childhood trauma, and mental health challenges." (page 10)

As evidenced through feedback from youth who have received assistance from the Youth Employment Centre, good efforts are being made to help Yukon youth prepare to successfully participate in the workforce:

"They are effective at sizing a person up in terms of assessing your skills and where there would be a good fit for work."

"They want you to succeed and they help boost your confidence."

"Staff are open minded. If you have something to talk to them about, they are honorable and trustworthy about personal information."

Survey respondents were also asked to indicate their level of agreement about how ready they felt to look for a job after receiving employment services at Skookum Jim's. In aggregate (n=36), survey respondents indicated their level of agreement at 7.1 on a one to 10 point scale.

After the help I got at Skookum Jim's, I feel I will be ready to find a job on my own."

1	2	3	4	5	6	7.1	8	9	10
I do not agree at all						I agree very strongly			

Employers recognize the value of YEC's placement services.

As noted earlier, a total of 54 distinct employers have hired youth through the Youth Employment Centre over the period 2011/12 to 2016/17 (Q1). As shown in the table to the right, 25 employers hired youth once, 10 employers hired youth twice, one employer hired youth three times and one employer hired youth 6 times.

The table on the following page lists the employers that participated in the program from inception to the end of Q1 2016/17. As can be seen from the table on the following page, a diverse assortment of Yukon businesses and organizations have hired youth with the assistance of the Youth Employment Centre over five years of program operations which suggests that Yukon employers do recognize the value of YEC's placement services.

YEC – Employer Participation	
Participation Frequency	No. of Businesses
1	25
2	10
3	1
4	0
5	0
6	1

Source: Skookum Jim Friendship Centre.

What seems to be in common among the 54 businesses, agencies and organizations listed in the table is their size (micro to small) and depth of community roots (board or owner-operated, First Nation government). The emergent profile of the employer participants over the initial six year of program operations leads to a couple of observations. First, the three-month wage subsidy is seemingly

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of relatively less importance to larger businesses and organizations and of relatively more importance to small businesses, agencies and organizations. Small organizations tend to have smaller budgets for wages, or in the case of some non-profits, funding for wages will be project specific. Large organizations have larger budgets for wages. Thus, a wage subsidy could make a big difference for the bottom line of a small operation but is unlikely to be much of a factor in a larger organization's decision to seek out a youth work placement.

However, just because large employers may not be motivated by a wage subsidy to pursue a youth work placement does not mean that large employers should, in general, be abandoned as potential source of youth work placement opportunities. Interviews with employers suggested that placement opportunities can exist within larger organizations but that employment agencies like YEC need to be creative in pointing out where the opportunities exist. For example, YEC could present major retailers with a slate of job candidates prior to the onset of the holiday shopping season when extra staff are needed. It should also be kept in mind that large employers for whom a wage subsidy is not a factor in hiring may nevertheless consider foregoing a wage subsidy to hire well-supported youth workers.

Youth Employment Centre – Participating Employers 2011/12 to 2016/17 (Q1)

Alpine Bakery	Chilkoot Dental	Love to Learn Daycare	Treeline Woodworks Ltd.
Alpine Vet Clinic	Climate Clothing	Midnight Sun Sheet Metal & Heating	True North Heating & Ventilation
Air North	Downtown Dayz Daycare	Nacho Nyak Dun - Burger Shack	Westmark Hotel
Arctic Inst. for Community Research	Dunrite Bookkeeping Services	Nancy's Electric	Whitehorse Star
ATAPOP Homes	Edgewater Hotel	NGC Builders Ltd.	Women of Wisdom
Backcountry Construction	Elements Esthetics Studio	Northern Culture Expressions Soc.	Youth Employment Centre
Blisten Creek Tree Services	Erik's Audio and Visual	Northern Native Broadcasting	Youth of Today Society
BYTE	Farmer Robert's	Play and Learn Daycare	Yukon Arts Centre
CanaDream	Fireweed Community Market	Robbyn's Street Grill	Yukon Learn Society
Carcross Tagish First Nation	Grateful Spud	Sandor's Clothing	YFN Tourism & Culture Association
Castlerock Construction	Ichiban House Restaurant	Second Show Kids Consignment	Yukon Tree Services Ltd.
Cekask Development Corporation	Kilrich Industries	Shoppers Drug Mart	Zen Salon & Spa
Challenge	Leaping Feats/Heart of Riverdale	Skookum Jim Friendship Centre	
Champagne Aishihik First Nations	Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation	Smart Phone Technology & Repair	

A second observation is that the businesses, agencies and organizations that fit the emergent profile of employer participants have a high degree of patience and community interest. As noted in an employer interview "while the wage subsidy was important, the long-term goal was an awesome employee." The ideal YEC employer recognizes that giving youth an opportunity to develop the experience needed to succeed in the workplace is beneficial both to the youth and the community. Building and maintaining a network of employers that value and support youth employment will pay dividends when work placements for youth are being sought.

Youth Employment Centre Long-term Outcomes

Improved labour market outcomes for youth, which are, in part, attributable to the efforts of Youth Employment Centre.

Labour market outcomes can be viewed from different perspectives, including from a market perspective and from the perspective of the individual seeking work. Labour market outcomes are also longitudinal in nature as labour market experiences are cumulative. Early-career job market successes lead individuals to positions with greater and greater job responsibilities. Thus, significant improvements in labour market outcomes can only reasonably be expected to be seen over a time horizon longer than the Youth Employment Centre's first six years of operations.

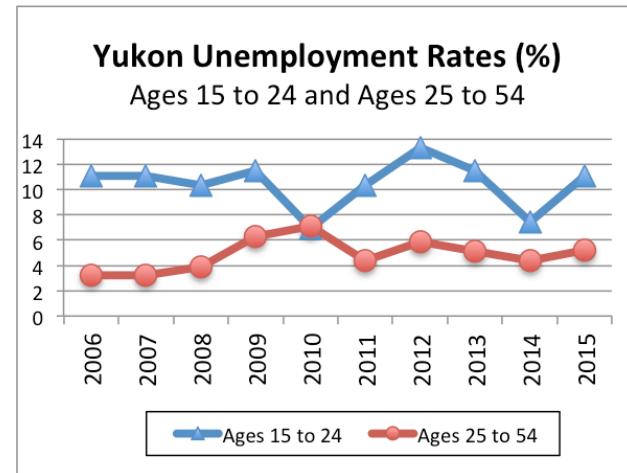
Data from the Yukon Bureau of Statistics indicates that, similar to Canada's national labour market profile, unemployment rates for Yukon youth (ages 15 to 24) are consistently higher than for Yukon adults (ages 25 to 54). As shown in the chart to the right, the unemployment rate for youth exceeded the unemployment rate for adults in nine out of 10 years in the period 2006 to 2015. On average over that same 10-year period, the unemployment rate for Yukon youth (10.5%) has exceeded the unemployment rate for adults (4.9%) by 5.6%. The data confirm that entry into Yukon's labour market by all youth can be a tough nut to crack.

From a labour market perspective, it is not reasonable to expect that Youth Employment Centre programming will have a discernable effect on youth employment rates given the scale of the program relative to the scale of the Yukon youth labour market. According to data from Yukon Bureau of Statistics, there were 2,400 individuals aged 15 to 24 employed in Yukon in 2015. On average over the ten year period 2006 to 2015, 2,500 individuals aged 15 to 24 were employed in the Yukon. Thus, market-based outcomes for a program which delivered employment-related services to an average of 162 youth per year and secured work placements for 88 individuals over its first six years of operations needs to be considered in the overall context of the Yukon's youth labour market.

The achievement of labour market outcomes can also be viewed at level of the individual level. When asked what more Skookum Jim's could have done to help them find a job, survey respondents had this to say:

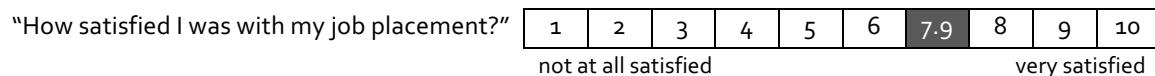
"Skookum Jim's always delivers the support I need with exemplary advice."

"I think the Youth Employment Centre did an excellent job with helping me find a job."



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For youth survey respondents who found a job through the Youth Employment Centre (n=24), the thing they liked best about their job was the opportunity to learn new skills at their job, a finding which suggests that their YEC work placement put them on a good path to labour market success over the longer term. When asked about overall satisfaction with their job placement, the same respondent cohort indicated an aggregate level of satisfaction of 7.9 on a one to 10 point scale.



Employers access the Yukon's youth workforce on a consistent basis to meet their labour needs.

Yukon employers have accessed the Yukon's youth workforce with the assistance of Youth Employment Centre on a consistent, though limited, basis. As noted earlier, an average of 14 youth received job placements each year over the years 2011/12 to 2015/16. As the available financial and operations data was not sufficiently detailed, patterns of placement within a given funding year could not be determined.

Some interview respondents wondered about 'crowding out' in the entry-level job market as a result of other Yukon labour market initiatives, specifically the Yukon Nominee Program. The Yukon Nominee Program allows Yukon employers to hire workers from outside of Canada upon demonstrating they cannot find Canadian citizens to fill permanent full-time jobs. Data from Yukon Education indicates, however, that a relatively small number of positions are filled via the Yukon Nominee Program. Over the 2008 to 2016 period, an annual average of 125 permanent full-time jobs were filled through the Yukon Nominee Program.

As noted earlier, there are no fewer than 32 agencies and organizations currently with some stake, from a sliver to primary focus, in the delivery of employment-related services to Yukon youth. The large number of employment-related offerings likely makes it difficult for employers to stay up to date on the nuanced differences between the various employment programs currently on offer. In consequence, it is also likely difficult for smaller employment services programs like the Youth Employment Centre to maintain a visible profile in the broader employer community.

As observed by the Expert Panel on Youth Employment in *Understanding the Realities of Youth Employment in Canada*, when youth are looking for work "...they have the most success when they tap into personal and family networks to find a job; and for those who lack such networks, trying to build them can be very intimidating." (page 9, underlining added). As such a situation is likely faced by many of the youth who frequent the Youth Employment Centre, the Centre has a valid and continuing role to build and maintain proxy job networks on behalf of their youth clients.

Recommendations for Improving Program Effectiveness

As outlined in this evaluation, the Youth Employment Centre is satisfactorily fulfilling a key role for Yukon youth seeking entry level positions in the Yukon labour market. The 12 recommendations presented below are intended to provide direction for how the Youth Employment Centre can most effectively continue to provide meaningful and relevant services for youth clientele, while meeting the needs of the Yukon government funder and the mission and values of the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre Society.

- 1\ Investigate options for acquiring and implementing a computerized case management system to enhance the level of assistance provided to Youth Employment Centre clients and work placement employers.
- 2\ Continue to maintain an inventory of contacts for job-specific courses (e.g., First Aid, Food Safe, Fall Protection, etc.) delivered by agencies and organizations in Whitehorse and Yukon communities.
- 3\ Refine the nature of services delivered to youth from one-on-one job search assistance to include one-on-one soft-skills assessment and development. Use what is learned about an individual during the soft skills assessment and development to inform the one-on-one job search assistance which follows.
- 4\ With the assistance of the Yukon Bureau of Statistics, construct an inventory of potential Yukon employers who fit a profile similar to employers that have previously hired youth through the Youth Employment Centre (i.e., micro to small in size, deep community roots). Launch an outreach initiative to reach out to those employers to identify employer needs and catalogue opportunities so that the Youth Employment Centre can serve as a proxy job search network for Yukon youth who may not have personal and family networks to tap into to find a job.
- 5\ Encourage Yukon Education to construct a matrix that outlines the scope, eligibility criteria and main features of the programs currently being delivered by the 32 agencies and organizations with a stake in the delivery of employment-related services to Yukon youth. Disseminate the matrix so it can be used as an employment services navigation aid by Yukon youth.
- 6\ Nurture relationships with the agencies and organizations involved in the delivery of youth employment-related programming to help Yukon youth receive services appropriate and optimal for their individual circumstances.
- 7\ Given the preponderance of public sector employment in the Yukon and the very low uptake of employees through the Youth Employment Centre, by federal, territorial and municipal governments, encourage Yukon Education to investigate the barriers and constraints to the hiring of youth employees by public sector employers.

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- 8\ Develop and implement a plan to collect YEC operations data, including data for communities outside of Whitehorse, that can be used to continuously improve the quality of employment services delivered to Yukon youth by the Youth Employment Centre.
- 9\ Monitor the wage subsidy financial account at Skookum Jim's to determine how far in advance of the fiscal year end wage subsidy funds are being exhausted and explore options for increasing the level of funding if required.
- 10\ Establish two protocols, one for youth and one for employers. The youth employee protocol should outline the support youth can expect to receive from the Youth Employment Centre through the course of a work placement as well as the employment standards relevant to entry level positions and the procedure to be followed if an issue is encountered in the workplace. The employer protocol should outline the support employers can expect to receive from the Youth Employment Centre through the course of a work placement and identify primary and secondary points of contact at the Centre. Modify one or more YEC position descriptions to clarify the responsibility among YEC staff for maintaining contact with employers through the duration of a youth work placement.
- 11\ Establish a mentor network of individuals who have participated in YEC work placements whose expertise can be tapped by both Youth Employment Centre staff and work placement participants to provide ongoing support and guidance.
- 12\ Firm up the requirement for participating employers to complete a post-placement evaluation and collate the evaluation responses to capture lessons learned that can be used to improve work placement experiences for Yukon youth.

