

YOUTH STEPPING UP TO THE PLATE

Evaluating outcomes for Rookie League Youth Staff

DID YOU KNOW?

The youth unemployment rate in Toronto is skyrocketing, **140%** higher than adult unemployment.¹

33% of visible minority youth, **31%** of newcomer youth, and **28%** of all youth in Toronto aged 15-19 are unemployed.²

WHY IS THIS THE CASE?

Young workers in Toronto have largely been shut out of the slow post-recession economic recovery and currently face one of the worst unemployment rates in the province.

This struggle to find work is **particularly acute for marginalized youth**, including immigrants, visible minority groups, and those from low-income backgrounds.

According to the Greater Toronto Civicaction Alliance (2014) report, *Escalator Jobs for Youth Facing Barriers* **marginalized youth are more likely to lack adult role models in the workforce, social networks, pre-employment skills or experience, language skills and the academic qualifications** needed to find and hold down employment.²

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

SKILL DEVELOPMENT - The Conference Board of Canada identifies that young people need **fundamental skills** (communication, problem-solving etc), **personal management skills** (positive attitudes and behaviours, being responsible, adaptability etc), AND **teamwork skills** (working with others, participating in projects and tasks) in order to succeed in the workforce.³

WORK EXPERIENCE - both paid and unpaid, during adolescence helps youth acquire job references, job skills, social networks, and a work ethic that contributes to improved economic outcomes as adults. These early experience benefits are especially important for low socio-economic status youth.⁴

¹ St. Stephen's Community House and Access Alliance (2016) Tired of the Hustle: Youth Voices on Unemployment. Toronto, ON, October 2016.

² Greater Toronto Civicaction Alliance. (2014). Escalator: Companies and Youth Moving Up. Retrieved from <https://www.civicaction.ca/escalator/>.

³ The Conference Board of Canada. (n.d.). Employability Skills. Retrieved from <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/edu/employability-skills.aspx>

⁴ Perreira, K. M., Harris, K. M., & Lee, D. (2007). Immigrant youth in the labor market. *Work and Occupations*, 34(1), 5-34.

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

Jays Care Foundation (JCF) and Toronto Community Housing (TCHC) partner to provide the TCHC Rookie League program every summer. Rookie League is a 7-week summer day camp program for children and youth who reside in TCHC. Rookie League targets at-risk children and youth who face multiple barriers to accessing or engaging in physical activity or sport. In addition to the intended impact on the campers, there is intended positive impact for the Rookie League youth staff as well. In particular, how the experience provides opportunities for positive mentoring relationships, the development of key workplace skills, and how it helps to boost the confidence of the youth staff.

THEORY OF CHANGE

If youth are able to access adolescent work experience that is strength-based in its approach to positive youth development and provides comprehensive training and capacity building, and opportunities for positive peer mentorship...

...youth will enhance their **essential soft skills** (problem solving, conflict-resolution, teamwork, communication, leadership, creativity), their **self-confidence**, and their **workforce preparedness**.

PARTICIPANT PROFILE

64% of all Rookie League youth staff hired reside in priority neighbourhoods and **88%** identify as visible minorities.

The majority of staff were between the ages of 16 and 24 and are new to the role. **32%** of staff are returning with some having up to 4-5 years experience in Rookie League.

There are four roles youth staff can hold at Rookie League; Camp Director, Senior Program Leader, Junior Program Leader and Focus on Youth Staff.

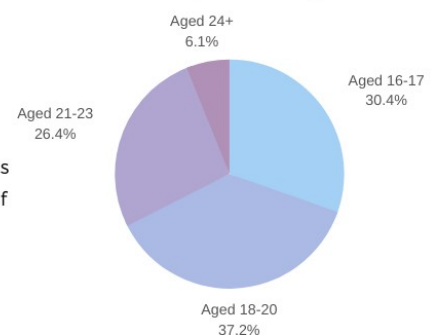
EVALUATION PLAN

The Program Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist of Jays Care, Maria Mardirosian, partnered with Dr. Philip Groff, **President and Chief Consultant for Creative Development Unlimited**, a Credentialed Evaluator from the Canadian Evaluation Society with fifteen years of experience, particularly working with youth programs, to conduct the Rookie League Youth Staff evaluation.

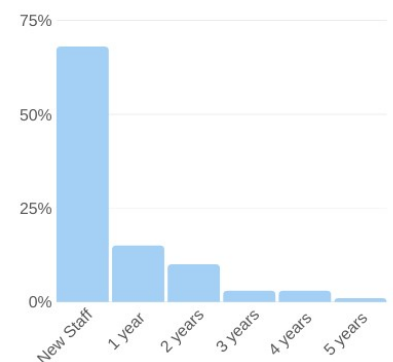
The evaluation framework was based on Best Practice principles of Utilization Focused Evaluation, and utilized a mixed model, multi-methodological design which include:

- the delivery of questionnaires with externally validated scales to program staff before and after training as well as at the conclusion of the 2019 Rookie League season ;
- semi-structured interviews with 2019 program staff and alumni ; and
- an in-depth literature review and secondary analysis of program data and documentation.

PARTICIPANT AGE



PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCE



WHAT DID WE FIND?

WE FOUND POSITIVE MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS

- Positive mentoring relationships were identified by **all** of the individuals interviewed during the course of the evaluation.
- These relationships were described as resulting from good communication skills on the part of the mentors, a strong work ethic, and a general sense of support received by the staff members.
- Furthermore, these positive mentoring relationships were connected by the respondents to their own personal development, their workforce preparedness, and their own ability to produce positive outcomes for the campers in their charge. Finally, the interviewees identified the positive mentoring they had received as **instrumental in their own growth as role models**.



WE FOUND KEY JOB SKILLS DEVELOPED

- Positive significant gains, of around **10%**, were found in a self-reported range of key workplace skills including problem solving, conflict resolution, creativity, and leadership.
- In interviews, respondents identified the skills developed in Rookie League as highly transferable to future employment, and to be great assets in their workforce preparedness.
- **97%** of our youth staff reported high levels of development on the Youth Leadership Life-Skills Development Scale (YLLSDS) and particularly on interpersonal skills and attributes such as empathy, acceptance, and willingness to work together. The remaining 3% reported Moderate Development.

Rookie League has had a big impact on me. It helped me stay out of trouble. If I wasn't doing Rookie League now, to be honest, I wouldn't know what I would be doing.

Rookie League definitely challenged me and gave me insight on where I am going to be going in the future.

One thing about Rookie League, every summer that I do it, I always think "okay it won't get any better than this and these kids are solid." But then, when I come back the next year, I have an even better experience.

WE FOUND BOOSTED SELF CONFIDENCE

- A positive significant gain, of around **18%**, was found in a self-reported measure of self-confidence, the highest seen in any of our self-reported measures.
- A standardized measure of self-efficacy, The General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE), further demonstrated significant gains in self-confidence from training that was maintained across the life of the program.
- In interviews, respondents reported that Rookie League had given them the **confidence they needed to seek other opportunities for employment or higher education**.

