



Welcome to the Diverse Credit Pathways Toolkit



This toolkit is a project of Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement that draws on the wisdom of the Communities Building Youth Futures (CBYF) network which operates in twenty rural, remote, and Indigenous communities across the country to develop community-wide strategies to support youth (aged 15-29) to succeed in high school and beyond.

Over the past five years, several CBYF communities have experimented with diverse credit pathways to increase and improve learning opportunities available for young people. You have likely arrived at this toolkit because you too have identified the same need.

This toolkit is for youth allies like you (ex. teachers, school administrators, caregivers, staff/volunteers at youth serving organizations and youth advocates broadly) who want to take a whole of community approach to diverse credit pathways. What we are sharing here is informed by research and insights from CBYF communities who implemented diverse credit pathways projects through community collaboration.

We invite you to explore to learn more about:

- The value of diverse credit pathways
- Existing diverse credit pathways in CBYF communities
- Existing provincially and nationally available diverse credit pathways
- How to create new diverse credit pathways in their own communities



What is a diverse credit pathway?

Diverse credit pathways is terminology used by Tamarack and CBYF. The word diverse is used here to describe providing a variety of options for youth to learn, especially those built on multi-sectoral community collaboration. Credit pathways describe the ways these different learning experiences are recognized by provinces or territories as credits toward a secondary school diploma or equivalent.

In short, diverse credit pathways describe any way that youth can acquire secondary school credits outside of the conventional opportunities available in their community.

Diverse credit pathways can include:

- Apprenticeship or co-operative education
- Flexible scheduling (like night or summer school)
- Wraparound support or tutoring
- Independent learning opportunity
- Project-based learning
- Land-based education
- Opportunities for re-engagement in education for youth that have not been attending school for some time

Other common terms for the approaches and programs described here can include **alternative education**, **experiential learning** or **21st century learning**.

What do we mean by conventional?

In this toolkit we use the term "conventional" to refer to traditional practices, methods, or approaches that have been widely used over time in Canadian education systems.

Conventional methods might involve in-person classroom instruction, fixed timetables, exams and written assignments.

We do not use this term to be negative and recognize that what is "conventional" is constantly evolving through the commitment and dedication of teachers, support staff, administrators and other partners in the education system.

About Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement & CBYF



Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement develops and supports collaborative strategies that engage citizens and institutions to solve major community issues across Canada and beyond. [Learn more here.](#)



Communities Building Youth Futures (CBYF) is a five-year pan-Canadian project to develop collective impact, system-wide solutions for youth as they build and act upon plans for their future. The original CBYF initiative was funded by the Government of Canada's Supports for Student Learning Program and delivered by Tamarack Institute. [Learn more about CBYF here.](#)

CBYF is active in 20 communities:

- | | |
|--|----------------------------|
| 📍 Alberni-Clayoquot, BC | 📍 Oxford County, ON |
| 📍 Chatham-Kent, ON | 📍 Nunavut |
| 📍 Chilliwack, BC | 📍 Portage la Prairie, MB |
| 📍 Chippewas of the Thames First Nation | 📍 Prince Albert, SK |
| 📍 Corner Brook, NL | 📍 Prince Edward County, ON |
| 📍 Digby, NS | 📍 Regina, SK |
| 📍 Grande Prairie, AB | 📍 Saint-Léonard, QC |
| 📍 Kahnawà:ke First Nation | 📍 Sudbury, ON |
| 📍 Laval, QC | 📍 Yellowknife, NWT |
| 📍 Moncton, NB | 📍 Yukon |

Land Acknowledgement

Turtle Island (North America) has been home since time immemorial to the ancestors of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples. We recognize that, in this territory, Indigenous rights holders have endured historical oppression and continue to endure inequities that have largely resulted from the widespread failure of non-Indigenous treaty people to hold up their responsibilities.

Gratitude

We extend our thanks to all the CBYF community members, contributors and reviewers whose insights have informed this toolkit.

I want to...

Learn more about diverse credit pathways

Find existing diverse credit pathways in CBYF communities

Create a diverse credit pathway

Learn more about diverse credit pathways

Education systems in Canada are currently in a constant state of evolution, adapting to:

- Meet the diverse needs of students;
- Keep up with our rapidly changing world, including responding to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Address the challenging legacies of where education has contributed to harms done to specific communities.

While systemic change takes time, we know that those in the education system (like teachers, support staff, and administrators) and other partners are consistently implementing a variety of ways that make an immediate difference for students. This can look like using innovative teaching methods, providing additional support and centering student interests and experiences. Where Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement and communities engaged in the CBYF program can bring interesting insights is from our experience with developing and supporting collaborative, community-driven strategies to engage individuals and institutions in addressing complex community issues like education.

Reconciliation and Education

The heavy legacies of residential schools and other harmful colonial practices cast a long shadow on education in Canada. Diverse credit pathways offer a tangible way to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action related to education, namely 6-12 and 62-66.¹

In this toolkit, we highlight **Call 10** for its specific relevance to creating diverse credit pathways for Indigenous youth.² Diverse credit pathways that are culturally appropriate, recognize Indigenous languages and engage community members in the education of the next generation can be important actions contributing to the revitalization and long-term health of Indigenous communities as well as facilitating reconciliation.

Through CBYF, communities alongside education partners and youth, have piloted multi-sector community-based diverse credit pathways. The strength of these diverse credit pathways lies in the fact that they were collaboratively driven by youth, community, and education partners. This means that they were able to respond to unique needs of youth in their specific local context, leaning into their strengths, interests, and responding to individual circumstances. For example:

- **Roving Campus** making learning engaging and relevant for a group of “non-attenders” on Portage La Prairie, MB with key supports like transportation and providing laptops;
- **After the Bell** addressed the lack of after-school free tutoring program in Corner Brook, NL through partnership with the local YMCA;
- **YK Prep Connect** provided a safer space in Yellowknife, NWT for youth to stay connected with their community and education when other spaces shut down in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The impact observed by CBYF communities providing diverse credit parallel the overarching themes of successful alternative programs collated by researchers for the Fall 2020 issue of the Transformative Educational Leadership Journal.³ These include:

- Inclusive and accessible environments involving removal of barriers and timely entrance and accessible and engaging learning opportunities for all learners;
- Flexibility in educational programming including flexible schedules, flexible curriculum structures and flexible attendance;
- Community connection including partnerships with community agencies providing students with access to volunteer and work experience, community mentors, community-based leadership opportunities, mental health services such as addictions counselling, and pre-employment training.



Spotlight: Roving Campus

Roving Campus is Portage la Prairie's (a CBYF Community) Community Innovation Fund Project. Roving Campus is a partnership with the school system to, in its first year, support 22 full-time students who were all identified as "non-attenders" and were experiencing significant barriers to high school completion.

Roving Campus' alternative curriculum emphasized hands-on lessons in the community so students could experience a more direct connection between what they were learning and why it mattered for their futures. Teachers worked closely with students on projects that were tailored to their interests, and helped them pursue employment opportunities to boost confidence and increase the chances of long-term employment success after graduation.

According to the CBYF Portage la Prairie team, "100% of students who completed the program [in its first year] graduated or are on track to graduate with mature student status, in the next school year. Prior to entering the Roving Campus, none of the students were on track to graduate. The majority of students had also secured summer employment before the end of the school year."

Parents expressed gratitude for the program and the benefits it provided to support their children's academic success. One parent wrote, "I am absolutely thrilled about the changes I have seen in 'A' since he started this program. Between the skills he has learned and even some excitement about going to class, and getting a job it has all been a super positive experience." Another parent wrote, "it is nice to see how pumped up he is when he gets home. As soon as the front door opens he's telling me about his day!". This alternative learning opportunity is significant not only because it supported students' academic success, but because it gave youth the confidence and desire to succeed in school and beyond.

Roving Campus in Portage La Prairie (a CBYF community) provides an alternate learning experience for young people with an alternate pathway to a high-school diploma, employability skills and other training and certification.

The Roving Campus considers the entire community as its "classroom" and moves its location from week to week. Students spend the majority of time outside the "classroom" and are offered different hands-on and experiential learning opportunities that cover an array of high school courses.

The Roving Campus provides students with transportation, lunch, a laptop and internet access thereby closing gaps experienced by its participants. The greatest success of the Roving Campus is that it offers students who were once at risk of not completing high-school, the engagement and support they need to chart a path to a brighter future.

[Read the full case study here.](#)

Diverse credit pathways can be particularly effective in better preparing students for life after high school by providing practical skills and real-world experiences. Participants in Roving Campus and YK Prep Connect, and as youth engaged in CBYF programs in Grande Prairie and Chilliwack reported that their experiences both inspired them to see a future in post-secondary education for themselves and gave them access to the support they needed to identify and apply to programs.⁴ This reflects findings from a 2020 EdCan piece authored by Dr. Alison Taylor of UBC's Faculty of Education on the benefits of expansive experiential learning. Diverse credit pathways can facilitate smoother transitions into post-secondary education or the workforce. By offering a more flexible and personalized learning experience, these pathways allow students to explore their interests in greater depth, helping them make informed decisions about their future.⁵

It is important to acknowledge that diverse credit pathways are not without their challenges. Barriers to access remain and they come with the stigma that is attached to taking a less conventional road. This experience of stigma was explored both by researchers from Western University and youth engaged in this project.⁶ However, because alternatives already exist in each CBYF community and in communities across Canada, there is great potential to build on these foundations to create accessible diverse credit pathways.

Youth insights

In October and November 2023, Roots & Rivers participated in facilitated listening sessions with four CBYF communities to hear youth reflections about and experiences accessing diverse credit pathways. Here's what we heard:

Challenges with the conventional school system

- Conventional classroom structures can create inflexible, high pressure environments creating barriers for youth with learning disabilities to engage.
- There is a lack of individualized, tailored support for youth on their learning journeys, particularly related to mental health support.
- Youth are curious and eager to learn about things beyond the high school curriculum, including entrepreneurial and practical skills.
- There is a lack of opportunities for hands-on learning and meaningful social connection.
- Unreliable transportation and food insecurity make getting to and being present at school challenging.



Challenges accessing diverse credit pathways

- Diverse credit pathways aren't actively shared or encouraged in traditional school settings, making it challenging to find the right information or feel like there's a space to ask.
- Diverse credit pathways can be highly stigmatized by families, peers, and in other settings, creating a barrier for youth to access more information or find the support they need.

What youth would like to see

- Initiatives to combat the stigma around different ways of learning and engaging with alternatives to the traditional classroom.
- Recognition that success can come from both the conventional school system and alternative pathways.
- Share testimonials from other youth who have navigated a diverse credit pathway, so youth can learn from the experiences of their peers.
- Equitable, accessible, and transparent access to information about existing diverse credit pathways that exist to support informed decisions and future planning.
- Presentations about work-learn opportunities like co-op throughout high school to support youth to plan.
- More outreach to youth and relationship building between youth and guidance counselors, school administrators, and teachers.
- Partnerships with community groups and working spaces to share about what they do in high school settings.



Spotlight: After the Bell

After the Bell Student Supports Tutoring Program is an initiative created by CBYF Corner Brook with the support of a Community Innovation Fund grant and supported by the YMCA of Western NL.

Students in Corner Brook were in need of a free tutoring program, as none existed in the community. The CBYF Corner Brook team's research found that when students encounter barriers to academic success and become disengaged from school, it becomes increasingly difficult to help them return to a successful path. The team wrote, "we have observed that the loss of connection to the education system is occurring at the elementary age level. It is becoming more challenging to reintegrate students back into the school system due to barriers such as lack of family support, financial responsibilities and mental health issues".

Rather than working to reintegrate students, After the Bell was designed to target students before they became disengaged and support their long-term commitment to school success and graduation. After the Bell engaged 26 students in its first year expanded to 129 students in the second year.

One student who received tutoring through the program wrote, "before I found out about the tutoring program, I even considered dropping academic math to do basic math. Once I started and met with my tutor, within a few sessions I had already started to notice a change in myself... I was now at the same level as others in my class and I now felt comfortable taking on math questions alone".

[Read a case study about After The Bell here.](#)

Barriers & re-engagement

Informed by the youth insights above, as well as interviews with youth allies and desk research, we will explore these barriers and re-engagement opportunities that can impact youth on their education journey. A better understanding of these key moments can support the design of diverse credit pathways.

Barriers

These categories describe barriers that youth may face to engaging with or continuing with their education journey.

Structural

Age-related barriers: When youth reach the age of majority in their home province or territory (typically age 18) or “age out” of youth support systems, they may lack the support they need to continue pursuing education.⁷ This shift may prioritize other needs, like earning income, over pursuing additional credits.

Geographical barriers: the absence of a secondary school in some communities creates a significant structural barrier.⁸ Youth might be compelled to disengage if continuing their education means managing a long commute or relocating.

Technological barriers: Lack of digital infrastructure, poor connectivity and a lack of tech skills and/or learning opportunities contribute to an inability to effectively access online learning and to search for options and alternatives.⁹

Transportation barriers: Lack of accessible, reliable and affordable transportation means that youth cannot physically show up for school.

Commitments at home: Caring for family members, including children, may be a priority that prevents engaging with school.

Systemic

Lack of cultural safety: When the unique cultural backgrounds of youth are not meaningfully accounted for in their education experience, past harms, like the intergenerational legacy of residential schooling on Indigenous students, can continue to impact youth causing them to disengage from school.¹⁰

Lack of representation in the school system: Teachers and school administrators may not reflect the cultural diversity of the students they serve.¹¹

Resource gaps: Limited resources to support youth with different support complex needs (ex. mental health challenges) can create situations where it is untenable for a student to continue in a school environment.¹²

Distrust in systems: Experiences of oppressions in other systems may lead to distrust of education systems as well.

Limited access to information about alternatives: Information about alternatives may only be provided to youth as a reaction, rather than offered proactively. The burden of finding alternatives can fall on youth who may face challenges with systems navigation.¹³

Narrative

Narratives about community prospects: Pervasive stories that reinforce the idea of limited prospects in a community may lead to disengagement from education. Additionally, narratives that are validated by experience (like lucrative job options available to those who have not completed high school) can lead to youth leaving school.

Concern about the value of education:

Disengagement can result from narratives that secondary education offers little practical value and/or that proceeding to post-secondary education or training will be too expensive to manage.

Stigma around alternatives: Narratives contribute to stigma about exploring alternatives to conventional education, deterring some youth from exploring diverse credit pathways.



Re-engagement opportunities

Below we explore some re-engagement opportunities that counter the barriers above. These strategies can be the basis for improving or creating diverse credit pathways.

Shifting mindsets & redesign through local collaboration

Engagement and co-leadership: Building meaningful multi-sector partnerships with youth, allies in the education system and community partners can support a shift in mindset and create the conditions to develop a compelling diverse credit pathway.

Project-based learning: Project-based learning centred on community challenges that people can rally around serves as a re-engagement opportunity by making education more hands-on and applicable to real-world scenarios. It fosters critical thinking and collaborative skills.¹⁴

Rural/remote programs: Creating programs that recognize and celebrate the context of rural or remote communities may keep youth engaged. This approach acknowledges and addresses the unique challenges and opportunities in these areas, fostering a sense of belonging and relevance.¹⁵

Active inclusion

Active outreach to youth: Actively reaching out to youth through dedicated outreach is an important re-engagement strategy. Initiatives that connect with youth where they are, addressing their concerns and needs, can rekindle interest in education.

Youth voice in program design: Including the perspectives and insights of youth in the design and improvement of educational programs is a powerful on ramp. This ensures that the programs are not just for youth but also shaped by their unique experiences and aspirations.

Wraparound supports

Meal programs: Offering food as part of programming addresses a fundamental need. Proper nutrition is linked to better educational outcomes, and providing meals ensures that basic needs are met, enabling youth to focus on their education journey.

Transportation support: Providing transportation assistance tackles logistical barriers youth may face. It ensures that youth have the means to get to and from educational programs, this particularly important in areas with limited or no public transportation.

Child care support: Offering child care support recognizes the challenges faced by parenting youth. Addressing this barrier makes it feasible for young parents to pursue their education while ensuring the well-being of their children.

Technical support: Devices, access to the internet and skills training are essential tech supports.

Other supports: Other supports based on individual needs may include mental health services and cultural supports.

Spotlight: YK Prep Connect

YK Prep Connect, a tutoring program facilitated by CBYF Yellowknife with two local service agencies (the Youth Centre and the NWT Career Centre) was designed to provide safer spaces for students to work on homework and receive academic and emotional support from other youth.

In 2020, when COVID-19 restrictions resulted in the closure of many safer spaces, YK Prep Connect helped youth stay connected to social supports and provided safer places to spend time outside of school hours. The benefits of social connection as a result of the program were identified by several youth participants. One young person wrote, “the new people have introduced me to a path I would never have thought of in the past. It opened new doors for me that I had never expected when I learned how to read and write”. Another participant mentioned that the tutoring and mentorship he received helped him choose a career path and inspired him to apply for further education.

The YK Prep Connect program was equally beneficial for the volunteers and tutors. Like the participants, youth tutors were affected by the temporary closure of many local services as a result of COVID-19 restrictions. This affected both their mental health and academic achievement. The leadership team wrote, “this project had a positive impact on the community volunteers as it helped volunteers who were students improve their grades and helped other volunteers build better relationships in the community and to improve their leadership capacity”.

Because the tutoring program was run out of both service agencies, students and youth tutors had greater access to services as a result of their involvement in the project.

Watch this [short video about how YK Prep Connect works](#) and learn more about [CBYF Yellowknife](#).

Find existing diverse credit pathways in CBYF communities

Diverse credit pathways already exist in most CBYF communities. We have assembled a database that provides an overview of the programs available in each community with a short description of what the program is, who it is for and links to contact information.

If you are directly supporting youth to connect with diverse credit pathways, we recommend familiarizing yourself with local options and using this [decision tree](#) to guide your conversation.

You can explore what is currently available in each community at the links below:

[Alberni Clayoquot, BC](#)

[Chatham-Kent, ON](#)

[Chilliwack, BC](#)

[Chippewas of the Thames First Nation](#)

[Corner Brook, NL](#)

[Digby, NS](#)

[Grande Prairie, AB](#)

[Kahnawà:ke](#)

[Laval, QC](#)

[Moncton, NB](#)

[Oxford County, ON](#)

[Nunavut](#)

[Portage la Prairie, MB](#)

[Prince Albert, SK](#)

[Prince Edward County, ON](#)

[Regina, SK](#)

[Saint-Léonard, QC](#)

[Sudbury, ON](#)

[Yellowknife, NWT](#)

[Yukon](#)

You can view [all pathways in all communities at this link](#). You can also view these pathways [on this Kumu map](#).

Did we miss something?

[Fill out this form](#) to help us keep the database up to date for CBYF communities.

What if I don't live in a CBYF community?

Check out programs that are province/territory- or nation-wide in our database.

There are very likely diverse credit pathways available in your community.

We suggest:

- Doing an online search for “[insert your community here] alternative education”
- Doing an online search for “[insert your community here] adult education” or “[insert your community here] continuing education”
- Contacting your local school boards.
- Contacting your local post-secondary institutions (i.e. colleges or universities) to see what options they have for completing secondary school credits.



Creating a new diverse credit pathway

To create a diverse credit pathway you will need a combination of a great team of champions, deep engagement with youth and community, strong relationships with education partners and a working knowledge of the bureaucracy you may be working within.

Types of diverse credit pathways

Based on researching diverse credit pathways available across Canada and engaging with CBYF communities that have created their own, we have developed these three categories of diverse credit pathways for you to consider. The first two categories are focused on creating new ways to support youth to achieve available high school credits while the third is focused on developing brand new credits.

Community-led

Community-led diverse credit pathways are initiated and led by community collaborators and are supported by education partners. Through these pathways youth are supported to achieve available high school credits through things like:

- Tutoring programs
These programs might provide 1:1 support, flexible program times and other supports (ex. child care, transportation) to facilitate participation.
- Specialty community programming
These programs might include subject matter experts in the community providing instruction and experiences outside of a school setting.
- Other examples of community-led pathways in CBYF communities [can be found here](#).

Diverse credit pathways initiated by local CBYF initiatives that fit into this category include After the Bell and YK Prep Connect. Both of these programs were initiated by community organizations and receive support from education partners.

School-led

School-led diverse credit pathways are initiated and led by education partners and may be supported by community collaborators. Through these pathways youth are supported to achieve available high school credits through programs like:

- Credit recovery programs which allow youth to make up credits in a supportive environment
- Co-operative education or apprenticeship programs
- Night and/or summer school programs
- Other examples of school-led pathways in CBYF communities [can be found here](#).

Through our research, we found school-led pathways to be the most commonly available in most school districts. They can be found by seeking out “alternative”, “continuing” or “adult” education options in a community.

A diverse credit pathway initiated by a local CBYF initiative that fits into this category is Roving Campus. Roving Campus was initiated by teachers and administrators in a school and is supported by a network of community partners.

New credit

New credit pathways are typically initiated and led by education partners and may be supported by community collaborators. This category involves creating an entirely new and may include:

- Creating a new high school credit and stewarding it through provincial/territorial accreditation.
- Creating a new alternative school.

Dual credit programs, which exist in most provinces and territories, provide an option to create a new credit. In most jurisdictions, this type of pathway involves high school students taking post-secondary courses to receive high school credits (often recognized as electives). Partnerships with local post-secondary institutions can facilitate the creation of new credits that meet community needs.

For additional resources on how to create new credits or schools by province/territory, [visit this page of the database](#).

Things to consider when creating a new diverse credit pathway

Tamarack Institute and the CBYF initiative are deeply rooted in building community collaborations to make collective impact. The same is true for the diverse credit pathways that have been initiated by CBYF communities which take a whole of community approach to supporting youth on their education journeys.

You have likely found your way to this toolkit because you too want to work with others to make a difference for youth in your community. The considerations that follow encourage you to reflect on the assets your community already has and to look for opportunities to build your diverse credit pathway on a strong foundation of community collaborations.

Tamarack Institute's [Collective Impact at a Glance Tool](#) is a helpful resource to support your understanding of this model of social progress. If you want to dive deeper into collective impact, the [Collective Impact Toolkit](#) offers a wide collection of resources to support you.

Assemble your team

Having the right team will be essential to successfully creating your diverse credit pathway. Bringing together youth, youth allies within the education system and community partners together into a multi-sectoral partnership is an opportunity to engage in meaningful discussion about the needs of each group and the contributions they can make to a diverse credit pathway.

Explore these Credit Champion Personas to spark some thinking about the types of people you will need to support your journey. You can use these Canva templates to create invitations that can be shared by email or on social media.



Needs assessment

A diverse credit pathway should meet the needs of youth. Meaningfully engaging with youth and other youth allies is essential to identifying needs and designing engaging, appropriate interventions.

Conducting listening sessions and interviews with youth and youth allies can reveal the characteristics of groups of youth who would benefit from a diverse credit pathway. For example, the Roving Campus project specifically focused on youth who had not been attending high school. These insights can be supported with data from schools or school districts on student performance, graduation rates, and other relevant metrics.

You can use this Youth Listening Session template as a starting point. To make your own copy of these Google Slides to edit, [click here](#). Or, to make your own presentation on our slide template, [click here](#).

Other resources can also be used to support a needs assessment for a diverse credit pathway:

- A [Plan on a Page](#) has been developed for most CBYF communities. These concise, one-page infographics highlight the key elements of each community's collective impact approach and include specifics about challenges, opportunities and goals for each community.
- Tamarack Institute has created [Improving Youth Service Navigation: A Guide for Community Organizations](#) which can provide insights into the challenges youth face when accessing services, including within the education system, and ways to make navigation more clear and easy.
- Pathways to Education Canada in partnership with the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) has developed this [Community Mapping Tool](#), a resource which uses census data to help understand the barriers youth face in their communities as a result of poverty.

Asset mapping

Your community likely already has both diverse credit pathways and community resources that you can work with. This process of exploring what is already there is called asset mapping. Asset mapping is a participatory and collaborative process used to identify and leverage the strengths, resources, and capacities within your community. This can include tangible resources like parks, institutions, businesses, as well as intangible assets such as local knowledge, skills, and networks.

We suggest you work with your team to create an “inventory” of your community's assets as they relate to diverse credit pathways. This exercise also serves as a way to build and deepen relationships that will contribute to the success of your pathway. Tamarack Institute's library includes resources related to hosting asset mapping activities like [Asset Mapping: Finding the Strength in Your Neighbourhood](#) and [A Guide to Community Asset Mapping](#).

This asset mapping canvas [Asset Mapping Canvas Template](#) can be a space to collaborate and record your findings. To make your own copy of these Google Slides to edit, [click here](#).

Getting started with asset mapping

To support your exploration of community assets, you can explore our database of existing pathways. Connecting with the users and facilitators of these existing pathways is a useful exercise to understand the landscape you will be working in.

Case studies developed by Tamarack Institute from the diverse credit pathways created by local CBYF initiatives (like Roving Campus and After the Bell) can also be supportive.

Your school district may have an “education support services” or similar team who will be able to connect you to diverse pathways that exist in your community and avenues you can explore to create your own. You can also leverage any relationships you have at the district level to make inquiries and open doors. As you build an understanding of what is already happening in your community you may find ways to focus your energy. Perhaps the best way forward is improving an existing pathway rather than developing a new one.

People involved in existing pathways can help build your understanding of how the pathway operates. Key questions to ask may include:

- What is the history of this pathway?
- What resources (ex. financial, staffing) are committed to supporting this pathway and for how long?
- Does this pathway have a champion in the school? In the district?
- What are the inclusion criteria for youth? (ex. age range, cultural connection, etc)
- Does the pathway work within existing school timetables or does it have a more flexible timetable?
- How are staff resources allocated to this program?
- How are facilities allocated to this program?
- What supportive resources are in place for participants?

Connecting with community organizations like nonprofits, charities and foundations in your community can also reveal important assets.

Key questions to ask may include:

- Is there an organization in my community that offers specific expertise that could benefit my pathway?

Ex. an Indigenous friendship centre offering land-based programs, a community organization like a YMCA or United Way that offers tutoring programs, a local watershed conservancy that supports citizen science initiatives.
- Is there an organization in my community that can provide space for my pathway?
- Is there an organization in my community that provides grant funding for education projects?

Ex. a community foundation, municipal granting programs.

Resourcing

Diverse credit pathways will require human and financial resources. Building a relationship with your school district can support you early in your journey by understanding key policies and regulations around education in your community, available funding, and help you consider key questions to scope and design.

Some lines of inquiry to explore are:

- Is funding available in your school and/or district for pilot or innovation projects?
- How is staff time allocated in your school and/or district? What can you leverage within that system?
- Is in-kind or financial support from community partners an option?
- Is funding available through grant or foundation programs?

CBYF communities were able to access funding through Tamarack Institute's Community Innovation Fund. This impact report shows recipients used their funding and the impact on youth and their communities.

- Are there existing structures or partnerships you can leverage?

For example, N'Swakamok Native Alternative School is housed at the N'Swakamok Native Friendship Centre in downtown Sudbury, ON (a CBYF community). Since 1990, this program has provided one-to-one tutoring, small and large group instruction that integrates Indigenous content and traditional ways of teaching and learning.

N'Swakamok is part of an Ontario-wide network of 11 Alternative Secondary Schools supported by the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC), local school boards and the Ontario Ministry of Education. This structure supports how their program coordinator, teachers from the local school board and Friendship Centre staff are resourced to support students aged 17+ as they work toward their secondary, post-secondary, career and personal goals.

Moving toward planning and piloting

Based on what you have learned so far, we recommend collecting all of your information in one place and begin planning discussions with your multi-sectoral team.

Identify the youth your pathway will support

From your needs assessment, consider the group of youth you want your diverse credit pathway to support. You may want to make your initial inclusion criteria specific to engage a small group for a pilot.

Define your goals

Clearly outline the goals of your diverse credit pathways. You may consider factors such as improving student engagement, community connection, addressing specific academic challenges or increasing graduation rates.

Program design

Collaboratively design your diverse credit pathway with your team. Consider how the pathway can:

- Meet the needs of the youth you want to support;
- Work with existing or new curriculum and credits;
- Leverage best practices in teaching and learning;
- Work within our outside of a school setting and timetable;
- Connect with community organizations and resources.

Resource allocation

Identify the resources required for your pilot, including funding, staffing, technology, and materials. Work with your education and community partners to secure these resources.

Pilot structure

Define the structure of the pilot program, including the duration, number of participating students, and any specific criteria for enrollment. Then, establish a clear timeline for implementation and evaluation.

Monitoring and evaluation

Develop a monitoring and evaluation plan to assess the impact of your diverse credit pathway. This can include collecting both quantitative (ex. attendance) and qualitative (ex. Student experience) data to measure outcomes, engagement, and overall program success.

Feedback and iteration

At the end of the pilot, solicit feedback from everyone who was involved. This data can inform collective decisions about how to adapt and adjust your diverse credit pathway to better meet your goals.

Conclusion

We hope this toolkit has provided inspiration for your diverse credit pathways journey. We wish you success in your efforts to engage your community in creating a better future for youth.



Is this toolkit up to date?

The first version of this toolkit was developed between August 2023 and January 2024. It is maintained by Mairead Stewart (mairead@tamarackcommunity.ca).

Last toolkit update: March 21, 2024

Last updated by: Roots & Rivers Consulting

You can help us keep the toolkit in good shape by contacting us with feedback or submitting any diverse credit pathways we may have missed.

Have feedback about the toolkit? [Use this form.](#)

Have a new diverse credit pathway from a CBYF community to add? [Use this form.](#)

Toolkit index

1. [The Google Doc version of this toolkit](#)
2. [Airtable database](#) of all diverse credit pathways in all CBYF communities.

Community-specific views of the database are linked below:

[Alberni Clayoquot, BC](#)

[Chatham-Kent, ON](#)

[Chilliwack, BC](#)

[Chippewas of the Thames First Nation](#)

[Corner Brook, NL](#)

[Digby, NS](#)

[Grande Prairie, AB](#)

[Kahnawà:ke](#)

[Laval, QC](#)

[Moncton, NB](#)

[Oxford County, ON](#)

[Nunavut](#)

[Portage la Prairie, MB](#)

[Prince Albert, SK](#)

[Prince Edward County, ON](#)

[Regina, SK](#)

[Saint-Léonard, QC](#)

[Sudbury, ON](#)

[Yellowknife, NWT](#)

[Yukon](#)

3. [Kumu map](#) of all diverse credit pathways in all CBYF communities.
4. [Decision tree](#) to support conversations with youth about diverse credit pathways.
5. [Credit Champion Personas Presentation](#)
6. [Youth Listening Session Presentation](#)

[Click here](#) to make your own copy to edit in Google Slides. You will need a Google Account to do this.

7. [Asset Mapping Canvas Template](#)

[Click here](#) to make your own copy to edit in Google Slides. You will need a Google Account to do this.

8. [Slide Template](#)

[Click here](#) to make your own copy to edit in Google Slides. You will need a Google Account to do this.

9. Canva templates

You will need a Canva Account to use these.

- How to use the templates
- 16:9 template (for slides, etc)
- 1:1 template (for Instagram posts, etc)
- 9:16 template (for TikTok, Instagram stories, etc)

Footnotes

1. People for Education has created this shareable resource of the education-related [TRC Calls to Action](#).
2. TRC Call to Action 10 reads: We call on the federal government to draft new Aboriginal education legislation with the full participation and informed consent of Aboriginal peoples. The new legislation would include a commitment to sufficient funding and would incorporate the following principles:
 - Providing sufficient funding to close identified educational achievement gaps within one generation.
 - Improving education attainment levels and success rates.
 - Developing culturally appropriate curricula.
 - Protecting the right to Aboriginal languages, including the teaching of Aboriginal languages as credit courses.
 - Enabling parental and community responsibility, control, and accountability, similar to what parents enjoy in public school systems.
 - Enabling parents to fully participate in the education of their children.
 - Respecting and honouring Treaty relationships.

3. Alternate Education: Key Themes in Research A Collaborative Literature Review undertaken in 2020 by Directors of Instruction within both the Surrey, BC and Delta, BC school districts is an accessible and comprehensive overview of common themes in successful alternative programs and recommendations.
4. The Community Innovation Fund Impact Report from Communities Building Youth Futures at Tamarack Institute published in 2024 gives a comprehensive look at how CBYF communities used grants from the Community Impact Fund to develop programs and initiatives to improve youth outcomes in their communities. The section on Accessible Education provides insights into diverse credit pathways supported by these grants.
5. Vocational Education in Canadian Schools is a 2020 piece exploring the history of and promising practices of vocational education as it relates to helping students explore linkages and possibilities at the intersections of school and work.
6. An Exploration of the Lived Experiences of Students who attended Supervised Alternative Learning Programs in Southwestern Ontario is a 2022 doctoral research project that includes a review of literature related to the negative connotations and feelings of marginalization “at risk” students participating in “last resort” programs may experience.
7. Exploring Youth Outcomes After Aging-Out of Care, an exploratory 2017 research report from Ontario’s Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth shines light on typical outcomes for youth who age out of care and emphasizes the sense of abandonment youth report feeling as they age out.
8. In 2022, The Canadian Press reported the story ‘I was really homesick’: Some northern students travel far from home for high school which explores the experience of young people in the North who cannot access secondary school in their home communities due to lack of a physical school and/or poor broadband connectivity to participate in online education.
9. Contrary connections: Mapping Canada’s rural-urban internet divide, a mapping exercise undertaken by Canadian Geographic clearly shows the stark divide between urban and rural access to the internet in Canada and briefly explores the political, economic and geographic factors that contribute to this disparity.
10. The #UNIGNORABLE issue of intergenerational trauma is a short video produced in 2019 by United Way Calgary featuring the stories of Dr. Reg Crowshoe, a Piikani Blackfoot Nation Elder in Calgary, and Johnny Caisse, a young volunteer that helps run the Diamond Willow Youth Lodge. In parallel, they share what it means to experience intergenerational trauma, stemming from the historical policies and practices that have impacted the well-being of Indigenous people, including the legacy of the residential school system.
11. Though not up to date with current census data, Teacher and Administrator Diversity in Canada: Leaky Pipelines, Bottlenecks and Glass Ceilings is a 2007 report published in the Canadian Journal of Education that examines the benefits of a diverse educator workforce.
12. Responses to People for Education’s 2022-23 Annual Ontario School Survey (AOSS) show that mental health and wellbeing are a top challenge for schools across the country and provides insights into resource gaps experienced in Ontario schools.

13. Tamarack Institutes's Improving Youth Service Navigation: A Guide for Community Organizations highlights challenges barriers youth might face when navigating systems and recommends for community organizations to address these barriers.
14. There are many resources available about project-based learning, this one from SmartLab (an American education consultancy), provides an overview of project-based learning for high schools that outlines principles, benefits and implementation challenges.
15. The Werklund School of Education at the University of Calgary offers a Community-Based Teacher Education program that aims to address the struggle of attracting and keeping teachers connected to rural and remote communities.