



PYE INNOVATION PROJECT TRY A CAREER

“
Great program! I feel less lost
about life now. Thank you
— Program Participant

”



Table of Contents



About PYE	03
.....	
Innovation Program	04
.....	
Program Highlights	05
.....	
Youth Learnings	06
.....	
Employer & Community Partner Reflections	07
.....	
Program Delivery Reflections	08
.....	
Lessons Learned	09
.....	
Recommendations for Future Innovation Projects	10
.....	
Looking Ahead	11
.....	



ABOUT PYE



Building on the success of the first CBYF cohort in learning and advancing strategies together, Tamarack has collaborated with communities to create a new, more focused cohort. Starting in 2025, six communities have embarked on a journey together around understanding and addressing the issue of youth employment. For three years, these communities will respond to new and emerging systemic challenges within the youth employment sector through strategic, cross-sector partnerships, by using research and development approaches, and centering youth voice.

The goal for the communities is to develop and test innovative solutions to complex problems around youth employment, ensuring that they are scalable and sustainable. Tamarack share these innovations across the membership and broader learning network to build capacity to improve outcomes for youth.

HomeBase Yellowknife is the convenor organization for the PYE (Pathways for Youth Employment). HomeBase Yellowknife is a organization dedicated to supporting youth. PYE previously known as YESS works in collaboration with Tamarack, PYE national cohort and community partners



INNOVATION PROJECT

Innovation Project: Try A Career, where 20 youth had the opportunity to gain hands-on experience and explore potential career paths through job shadowing with local businesses in Yellowknife.



In July 2026, 9 employers hosted youth 20 participants as part of the Try a Career program. Youth participated in 4 half days of job shadowing (4 hours per day) along with a 4-hour evaluation workshop, forming a 20-hour program which youth were paid a living wage (\$30)

INNOVATION PROJECT

— “
This experience
helped me figure out
what I want to do -
Participant
” —

INTRODUCTION

THIS EVALUATION REFLECTS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INNOVATION PROGRAM AND THE EXPERIENCES OF PARTICIPATING YOUTH, EMPLOYERS, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS. IT HIGHLIGHTS KEY SUCCESSES, IDENTIFIES OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT, AND PROVIDES RECOMMENDATIONS TO STRENGTHEN FUTURE YOUTH EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVES. AS A YOUTH-LED PROJECT, THE EVALUATION EMPHASIZES LEARNING, COLLABORATION, AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT WHILE RECOGNIZING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF EVERYONE INVOLVED.

THE INNOVATION PROGRAM CREATED MEANINGFUL OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH TO EXPLORE CAREERS, BUILD CONFIDENCE, AND DEVELOP WORKPLACE SKILLS THROUGH HANDS-ON MENTORSHIP. THE GOALS WERE TO INCREASE EMPLOYMENT READINESS, SUPPORT CAREER EXPLORATION, STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS WITH COMMUNITY EMPLOYERS, REDUCE BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT, AND CREATE POSITIVE MENTORSHIP EXPERIENCES.

ABOUT

EVALUATION

THIS EVALUATION DRAWS ON OBSERVATIONS, YOUTH REFLECTIONS, EMPLOYER FEEDBACK, COMMUNITY PARTNER FEEDBACK, STAFF REFLECTIONS, AND ATTENDANCE RECORDS TO PROVIDE A BALANCED UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROGRAM. TO PROTECT PRIVACY, ALL PARTICIPANTS AND STAFF HAVE BEEN ANONYMIZED THROUGHOUT THIS REPORT.

— “
We'd love to be
part of this
project again -
Employer
” —

INNOVATION PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Here are some of the Highlights of this project.

Youth Engagement

- Participants actively engaged in workplace experiences.
- Youth explored careers that aligned with their interests.
- Participants demonstrated resilience and adaptability throughout the project.

Meaningful Mentorship

- Employers created welcoming learning environments.
- Many mentors expressed enthusiasm for supporting youth.
- Several employers expressed interest in participating in future cohorts.

Career Exploration

Youth discovered:

- careers they would like to pursue
- careers that were not the right fit
- personal strengths
- areas for future growth

Community Collaboration

The project strengthened partnerships between youth-serving organizations and local employers while creating new opportunities for future collaboration.

"I discovered strengths I didn't know I had."
-Participant

"We can't do what we do without people."
- Employer

”
"Learning what you don't want to pursue can be just as valuable as discovering what you do." - Community Partner

YOUTH LEARNINGS

1

BEFORE THE PLACEMENT

Participants described feeling:

- Excited
- Curious
- Nervous
- Motivated
- While some participants felt prepared, others identified opportunities for additional orientation before beginning their placements.

2

DURING THE PLACEMENT

Participants reflected positively on:

- Welcoming mentors
- Supportive workplaces
- Teamwork
- Learning through experience
- Being trusted with meaningful tasks

Participants also identified challenges including:

- Physically demanding work
- Adapting to different Teaching styles
- Waiting for direction
- Working outdoors
- Adjusting to workplace routines

3

WHAT YOUTH LEARNED

Many participants reported increased confidence and self-awareness. Common themes included: learning quickly, becoming more independent, improving communication, staying calm under pressure, discovering new interests, recognizing personal strengths

Importantly, participants also recognized that discovering a career was not the right fit is a valuable outcome that supports informed career decision-making.

4

LOOKING FORWARD

Participants identified future goals including:

- Pursuing employment - exploring skilled trades - learning additional technical skills - returning to education or training - continuing to build workplace confidence

EMPLOYER & COMMUNITY PARTNER REFLECTIONS

Community Partners highlighted working with youth through mentorship throughout this project.

What worked well

- Mentors enjoyed sharing their knowledge.
- Youth brought enthusiasm and curiosity.
- Employers appreciated contributing to youth development.
- Many organizations expressed interest in participating again.

Opportunities for Further Growth

- Providing orientation materials before placements.
- Creating opportunities for mentors and youth to meet beforehand.
- Clarifying expectations and roles.
- Improving communication throughout the project.
- Offering information about mentorship approaches and participant supports.

These recommendations reflect a shared commitment to strengthening future partnerships.

PROGRAM DELIVERY REFLECTIONS

HIGHLIGHTS

- Seeing the impact of employment on youths lives without the impact of barriers - Finnlay Rutherford Simon, Youth Project Lead

COMMUNICATION

Strong communication contributed to successful participant experiences.

At times, communication regarding participant support needs, transportation, and scheduling occurred after placements had begun. Earlier information sharing would allow supports to be coordinated more proactively.

Future projects would benefit from consistent communication timelines and clearly identified points of contact.

SUPPORTING YOUTH

Participants entered the program with diverse strengths, experiences, and support needs.

Some participants required additional encouragement, transportation assistance, or workplace introductions. When these needs were identified early, individualized supports contributed to positive outcomes.

Strengthening pre-program planning will help ensure supports are in place before placements begin.

ROLES AND COLLABORATION

The project demonstrated the importance of collaboration between the Innovation Coordinator, frontline support staff, supervisors, and employers.

Clarifying responsibilities before each cohort will help ensure everyone understands their role while allowing the Innovation Coordinator to focus on program delivery and relationship building.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation played an important role in participant success. The project highlighted the value of:

- Confirming transportation plans in advance
- Communicating changes early
- Identifying backup transportation options when required

One transportation scheduling oversight also reinforced the importance of centralized calendars and reminder systems.

Reflecting on these experiences will strengthen planning for future cohorts.

LESSONS LEARNED

The Innovation Program provided valuable insights that will strengthen future youth-led initiatives.

Early communication supports successful outcomes

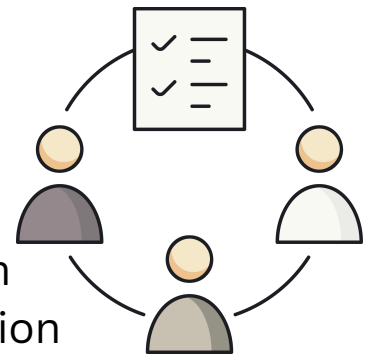


Youth benefit from individualized planning

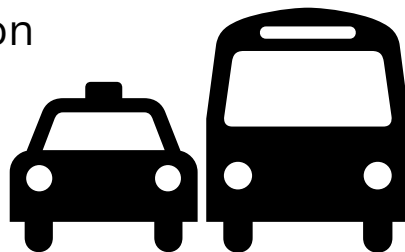


Employer preparation contributes to positive mentorship experiences

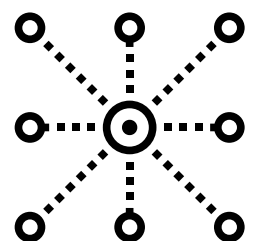
Clear roles strengthen collaboration



Transportation planning reduces barriers to participation



Flexibility and relationship-building remain essential components of youth-centered programming



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE INNOVATION PROJECTS

STRENGTHEN COMMUNICATION

- Establish communication timelines before each cohort.
- Identify primary contacts for each participating organization.
- Share participant support information in advance while respecting confidentiality.

ENHANCE EMPLOYER PREPARATION

Develop an employer orientation package that includes:

- Program overview
- Mentorship expectations
- Communication process
- Workplace support strategies
- Project timelines

STRENGTHEN YOUTH PREPARATION

Provide participants with:

- Workplace expectations
- Orientation activities
- Opportunities to meet mentors beforehand
- Transportation information
- Program schedules

CLARIFY ROLES

Develop written role descriptions outlining responsibilities for:

- Innovation Coordinator
- Frontline support staff
- Community partners
- Employers
- Supervisors

CONTINUE BUILDING YOUTH VOICE

Continue creating opportunities for youth to:

- Reflect on their experiences
- Provide feedback
- Shape future Innovation Projects
- Identify new career interests
- Share recommendations for program improvement



LOOKING AHEAD



The Innovation Program demonstrated the value of youth-led career exploration grounded in mentorship, collaboration, and experiential learning. While every project offers opportunities for growth, the experiences shared by participants, employers, and community partners highlight the meaningful impact of creating spaces where youth can explore their interests, build confidence, and develop workplace skills.



The lessons captured through this evaluation will help strengthen future Innovation Projects while continuing to centre youth voice, community partnerships, and meaningful employment experiences.



Thank You!



Thank you to:

The youth participants for their openness, effort, and willingness to learn;

To all of our employers; Arcan construction, Barren Ground Coffee, Summit Roofing LTD, Nahanni Construction LTD, Northern Roots Consulting, Old Town Glass Works Yellowknife, The Explorer Hotel, Food Rescue, and Bed Rock Builders.

Community partners for sharing their time, knowledge, and mentorship.

Frontline support staff for supporting youth throughout the project; and
Everyone who contributed to making this youth-led initiative possible.