



NIAGARA
WORKFORCE
PLANNING BOARD

Youth Employment Strategy: Short Report

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Executive Summary

A challenge with producing a youth employment strategy (YES) is that of a strategy's permanence amid a labour market that can easily shift. NWPB's goal with this document is that it will exist as an evolving resource to empower change agents that already are working with youth.

In order to provide this support, the YES explores three areas. First, it outlines common themes in various youth strategies from across Canada and the world. These reports highlight the following action items for youth engagement, each of which is relevant for the Niagara region:

- ✓ A demonstrated need for professional mentoring
- ✓ Ongoing formal and informal skill development for youth
- ✓ Changing the definition of entry-level employment
- ✓ Underscoring the positive influence of early access to career planning

Second, this report reviews barriers to youth employment that were gleaned through employer consultations. Some of the areas that require future research were:

- ✓ Addressing the hidden job market
- ✓ Enhancing labour market demand knowledge to inform skills training

Finally, this report provides an overview of Niagara-focused youth labour market data. According to the 2016 census, youth aged 15 to 29 made up 17.6% of Niagara's 2016 population; this is a slightly lower percentage than what is seen at the provincial level (19.2%). In terms of migration patterns, Niagara generally sees a small negative net-migration pattern (i.e., more people leave than move to) for youth aged 18-24, although this number has been moving closer towards zero.

Given our youth population, and the volume of youth moving into and out of Niagara, we examined factors relating to "successful" youth employment as outlined by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). According to the OECD, successful youth employment encompasses access to jobs, quality of jobs, and job satisfaction. In this report we focused on data relating to the first two indicators. NWPB plans to start assessing the third indicator (i.e., job satisfaction) throughout the 2019-20 fiscal year.



In terms of youth access to jobs, we examined measurable demand for jobs requiring 0-2 years of experience (a proxy for youth-level jobs). Throughout 2018, the top job demand was for sales and service positions (46.8% of job postings). The most frequently reported hard skills were knowing Microsoft Office and PowerPoint. The most frequently reported soft skills were oral and written communication and being detail oriented. The most frequently reported certifications were having a driver's license and First Aid.

For job quality, data from the Labour Force Survey indicated that youth employment in Niagara is fairly split between full- and part-time employment. Labour force indicators also indicate that youth are actively looking for work and, in recent years, in a proportionally greater number. Niagara, therefore, has an active youth labour force that is ready to work.

Future steps for this project include disseminating an employee survey to assess labour force job satisfaction and promoting this report to organizations that are interested in further supporting youth employment. In addition, NWPB will continue to consult with employers, service providers, local economic development organizations, and sector organizations to add more data that supports local activities and initiatives for youth employment.



Introduction

One of the challenges to producing a youth employment strategy is that of a strategy's permanence amid a labour market that can shift within a given year. Rather than exist as a document that offers specific recommendations, which may or may not be relevant to local labour market conditions within six months of publication, NWPB's Youth Employment Strategy (YES) is focused on empowering change agents through a review of common challenges and opportunities as they relate to youth employment. These pathways to supporting youth employment are then supported through a comprehensive mobilization of relevant local labour market data.

Taking this approach presents the YES as a document that exists to underwrite the efforts of organizations that are already on the front lines of supporting youth and youth employment. The YES recognizes that we work in a climate where it is possible, and necessary, to affect change to short-term challenges while also working toward addressing more systemic issues. However, those changes must begin with a demonstration of need through an evidence-based process. NWPB proposes that the YES be that evidence-based process, such that organizations of any size can work toward improving youth labour market outcomes.

This summary document is drawn from the comprehensive report of NWPB's Youth Employment Strategy. In this summary, readers will find an overview of priority areas for youth engagement as identified in other Canadian and international communities, highlights of local priorities drawn from previous NWPB reports on the youth labour market, and a primer on youth labour market indicators which reflect measures of "successful" youth employment as identified by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.



Common Themes to Supporting Youth Employment

Youth employment and engagement is a common goal across Canada and much of the world. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)'s report, *Local Strategies for Youth Employment*, identified three priority youth groups for targeted employment support.

1. Youth who are neither in employment, education, or training
2. Youth with college-level credentials who cannot find employment in their field of training
3. Youth with university-level credentials who cannot find employment in their field of training

Multiple communities in Ontario and Canada have recognized the need for supporting youth through employment and engagement strategies. This report reviewed documents from Kingston, ON; Guelph, ON; Halifax, NS; Toronto, ON; Hamilton, ON; Cumberland, NS; and the United Nations Development Programme. Four core themes, each of which could be applied to the youth groups identified by the OECD, emerged as areas of opportunity for supporting youth employment in Niagara.

The Changing Definition of Entry-Level Employment

The report of Kingston's Youth Employment Strategy Task Force was one of many strategies reviewed in this project that reflected on how the definition of entry-level work has shifted.¹ Where the traditionally held definition of an entry-level job is that of a position one can enter without previous employment experience, more and more job postings are expecting an entry-level worker to bring 3-5 years of employment experience to a position. This poses a challenge to recent graduates at all levels of educational attainment, even those who may have completed a work placement. Kingston's report outlined the potential for employer engagement on this front in order to explore reasonable expectations for entry-level employees. It further suggested a potential path forward that included incentives for employers and expanded hiring and training resources.

¹ Poverty Reduction Initiative – United Way Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington & Kingston (2016) Retrieved from: https://www.unitedwaykfla.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Youth_Employment_strategy_2016_WEB.final_.pdf



A Demonstrated Need for Professional Mentoring

From the United Nations² to the city of Hamilton³, youth employment goes hand-in-hand with professional mentoring. Each of the reviewed youth employment strategies mentioned increasing mentorship opportunities through apprenticeships, internships, co-op placements, and volunteer programs as a means of giving youth additional access to vital mentorship and work experience. At the same time, facilitating these mentorship processes requires collaboration between the youth workforce, itself, as well as employers and educational institutions. Areas of opportunity that were highlighted in various youth strategies once again focused on incentives, collaboration, and clear paths for integrating service learning into workplaces.

Ongoing Formal and Informal Skill Development

Both Cumberland County⁴ and Halifax's⁵ strategies highlighted the need for youth to cultivate their marketable skills while undertaking education and training and as they transition into the workforce. This focus was on both interpersonal skills as well as technical skills, as both of these are transferrable to the workplace and can be cultivated outside of a formal classroom setting. Though these reports originated in Atlantic Canada, they mirror the findings of Ontario-based strategies. Through this local context, existing strategies and reports point to the wealth of community training programs that exist in Ontario and frequently underscore the need to increase the awareness of these resources within their host communities.

² United Nations Development Programme (2014) Retrieved from http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Democratic%20Governance/Youth/UNDP_Youth-Strategy-2014-17_Web.pdf

³ Workforce Planning Hamilton (2012) Retrieved from <http://workforceplanninghamilton.ca/publications/220>

⁴ Town of Amherst & Municipality of Cumberland (2014) Community Economic Development Strategy. Retrieved from <https://www.cumberlandcounty.ns.ca/413-community-economic-development-strategy-september-2014-1/file.html>

⁵ Halifax Youth Leadership Program. Retrieved from <https://www.halifax.ca/recreation/programs-activities/youth-programs-services/youth-leadership-program>



The Early Influence of Educators in Career Planning

The City of Toronto took career planning literally in their 2015 Youth Engagement Strategy.⁶ In this document the City of Toronto sought to promote municipal planning through classroom-focused career planning. Most other youth employment strategies reviewed for this project agreed that educators played a strong and formative role in steering career planning activities in youth. Locally, consultations with the Niagara Industrial Association sent a clear message that Niagara's manufacturers have a strong interest in seeing career planning begin well in advance of the Grade 10 high school careers course. Across the board, the youth engagement studies highlighted the benefit of early career planning and cultivating career interests through direct engagement, job shadowing (where feasible), and through current and relevant labour market data.

⁶ City of Toronto (2015) Retrieved from https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/98d2-YES_FINAL_Short_accessible_sm.pdf



Local Themes to Supporting Youth Employment

In consideration of the aforementioned challenges and opportunities observed in other communities, all of which are relevant to Niagara, NWPB's previous research and collaborations have identified further priority areas for youth employment.

Addressing the Hidden Job Market

As part of NWPB's ongoing efforts to build the best possible picture of job demand within the Niagara region, NWPB conducts the Employer One survey. One key question that is delivered within Employer One assesses employers' preferred recruitment methods. Data from both 2017 and 2018 deliveries of the survey indicated that word of mouth recruiting, that is to say recruiting through personal contacts, referrals, and informal networks rather than public facing job postings, is top of mind for employers when they are looking to hire. Though NWPB is able to track and aggregate public facing job postings, employer preference for hiring through informal methods reflects job demand that is largely inaccessible to the youth labour force, as youth typically have no professional connections beyond their immediate family. This reality can pose significant barriers to employment for youth, particularly youth at risk and marginalized youth.

In-demand skills, skills alignment, and local educational attainment

Recent research on manufacturing, in particular advanced manufacturing, led to a comprehensive review of employer-identified, in-demand technical and interpersonal skills. The results of this study suggested trends within this sector tended to change on an annual basis. These changing trends speak to a need for skills data that are regularly updated, focused on priority industry sectors, and linked to training and service providers. Additionally, the prevalence of hiring through the hidden job market means that the skills that employers prioritize in this method of hiring are not being captured in aggregate data. This creates systemic barriers to building evidence-informed training programs, despite the capacity to deliver this training existing within Niagara.

A Primer on Youth Employment and “Successful” Youth Employment in Niagara.

The previous sections of this document focused on an existing body of work for supporting youth employment. This section shifts to the labour market data that define youth employment. It is the goal of NWPB's youth employment strategy that these data would shape an evidence-based context for demonstrating need and measuring outcomes as they relate to youth employment. Comprehensive data for Niagara and each of Niagara's municipalities can be found in the full version of this strategy.

Table 1 provides a high-level summary of Niagara's youth population benchmarked against Ontario.

Table 1. 2016 Youth Population, Niagara Region and Ontario⁷

Age Group	Niagara, 2016		Ontario, 2016	
	Count	% of Total Population	Count	% of Total Population
15 to 19 years	25,710	5.7%	811,665	6.0%
20 to 24 years	28,155	6.3%	894,390	6.7%
25 to 29 years	25,130	5.6%	874,350	6.5%
Youth total	78,995	17.6%	2,580,405	19.2%

⁷ Statistics Canada. 2017. *Niagara, RM Census Profile*. 2016 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2016001.

Table 1's data show that Niagara has a proportionally smaller youth population when compared to Ontario. These figures alone are neither an advantage nor a disadvantage. However, when put in the context of migration patterns in the region, as seen in Table 2, we can see how increasing youth employment stands as an opportunity to retain part of the considerable flow of young people who come into and leave the Niagara region.

Table 2. 2016 Youth Population, Niagara Region and Ontario⁸

Age Group	2011-2016		
	In-migration	Out-migration	Net-migration
0-17 Years	11,525	8,045	3,480
18-24 Years	8,795	8,871	-76
25-44 Years	21,832	20,100	1,732
45-65 Years	15,370	8,841	6,529
65+ Years	7,714	5,091	2,623
Total	65,236	50,948	14,288

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) proposes that “successful” youth employment can be assessed using a variety of indicators including whether youth have access to jobs, the quality of the jobs in which youth currently work, and youth satisfaction with their current employment.⁹ Within the scope of this project, NWPB has the capacity to report on the first two points. With respect to employment satisfaction, NWPB is undertaking a project in the summer of 2019 that will allow us to begin to engage with this particular measure as part of our long-term commitment to supporting youth employment.

⁸ Taxfiler, Census Division migration patterns, Table D, 2011-2016

⁹ OECD Development Policy Tools – Evidence-based policy making for youth well-being: A toolkit Retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/education/evidence-based-policy-making-for-youth-well-being-9789264283923-en.htm>

Table 3 begins to shape an understanding of employment opportunities available to youth in the Niagara region using an aggregation of measurable job demand. Here we have captured job demand data that require 0-2 years of experience, excluding postings that appear on Kijiji.

Table 3. Job Demand Available to Youth in 2018¹⁰

Occupation	2018 Count
Sales and service occupations	1,748
Business, finance and administration occupations	579
Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations	396
Occupations in education, law and social, community and government services	275
Health occupations	192
Natural and applied sciences and related occupations	178
Management occupations	142
Occupations in manufacturing and utilities	80
Occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport	71
Natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations	71
Total	3,732

Placing this demand in a broader context, the “entry level” or youth-accessible job demand represented about 36.5% of all available job demand in Niagara during the 2018 calendar year. Once again, we know that job demand measurable through data aggregation is not a complete measure of demand, but it is the first point of contact for job seekers.

¹⁰ Gartner Talent Neuron, Niagara region job postings requiring 0-2 years of experience, 2018.

An added benefit of measuring job demand through data aggregation is that it allows for the production of skill matrices for given occupation groups. Table 4 identifies the top interpersonal skills, technical skills, and certifications that were the most frequently occurring in 2018.

Table 4. Skills Matrix for In-Demand Occupations in 2018¹¹

Skill or Certification	Count
Interpersonal Skills	
Oral and written communication	867
Detail oriented	839
Team player	659
Customer service oriented	415
Integrity	404
Technical Skills	
Microsoft Office	390
Microsoft PowerPoint	94
Food preparation	88
Bilingual	80
Bilingual French	78
Certifications	
Driver's License	536
First Aid certification	154
Certification in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)	78
Food safety programs	54
Canadian Securities Course	31

Part of NWPB's ongoing commitment to maintaining the Niagara Youth Employment Strategy is to provide regular updates on in-demand skills. Tracking these changes at a twice annual frequency would allow for additional responsiveness to employer needs from local service providers and post-secondary institutions. One potential outcome of future employer engagement on this document could be to identify the specific occupations and industries

¹¹ Gartner Talent Neuron, Niagara region job postings requiring 0-2 years of experience, 2018



that should merit their own skills matrix for routine production. NWPB has the capacity to produce and deliver these data to interested stakeholders.

Job quality is the second of the OECD-identified indicators of youth employment success that NWPB can currently explore. One of the easiest measures of job quality is that of full-time versus part-time employment. Table 5 identifies the annual employment for youth residing in the St. Catharines-Niagara Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) and provides a breakdown of full-time and part-time employment.

Table 5. Youth Employment in the St. Catharines-Niagara CMA¹²

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Employment	29,500	31,500	34,400	28,100	29,900
Full-time employment	14,300	15,400	17,800	13,200	15,400
Part-time employment	15,200	16,200	16,600	14,900	14,500

On average, the last five years have shown that youth employment in the St. Catharines-Niagara CMA is about 49.5% full-time and 50.5% part-time. For context, Niagara's figures in terms of full-time and part-time youth employment are quite comparable to those observed in Ontario, where 49.9% of youth worked in a full-time capacity and 50.1% worked in a part-time capacity.¹³

¹² Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0096-01 Labour force characteristics by census metropolitan area, annual. Note that the St. Catharines-Niagara CMA does not include data for Grimsby and West Lincoln. This distinction is beyond the control of NWPB. Within this data set youth are defined as individuals aged 15 to 24 years.

¹³ Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0018-01 Labour force characteristics by sex and detailed age group

Table 6 places the employment figures seen in Table 5 in the context of overall labour market performance indicators.

Table 6. Youth Labour Market Engagement in the St. Catharines-Niagara CMA¹⁴

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Unemployment rate	16.2%	15.8%	8.5%	9.6%	12.8%
Participation rate	70.4%	74.4%	73.2%	69.3%	68.7%
Employment rate	59.0%	62.6%	66.9%	62.6%	59.9%

It is important to note with these data that a rising unemployment rate is also an indicator of youth who are actively seeking employment. Youth who are not actively seeking work are not considered unemployed. Rather, they are treated as individuals who are not in the labour force. Therefore, an increase in the unemployment rate between 2017 and 2018 suggests a youth labour force that is actively looking for work in proportionally greater numbers.

¹⁴ Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0096-01 Labour force characteristics by census metropolitan area, annual.

One final indicator for estimating job quality is represented in employment income. Table 7 uses data from the 2016 census to capture an estimate of median employment income among employed youth residents in Niagara.

Table 7. Median Youth Employment income in Niagara¹⁵

Occupation	15 to 19 years		20 to 24 years		25 to 29 years	
	Full Time	Other	Full Time	Other	Full Time	Other
Management	NA	NA	\$28,872	\$13,338	\$38,008	\$19,841
Business, finance and administration	NA	\$5,047	\$30,625	\$11,125	\$40,491	\$17,700
Natural and applied sciences and related occupations	NA	\$6,705	\$33,863	\$15,298	\$50,445	\$22,082
Health	NA	\$7,113	\$42,816	\$16,198	\$54,630	\$29,289
Education, law and social, community and government services	NA	\$4,465	\$30,748	\$11,615	\$44,676	\$21,753
Art, culture, recreation and sport	NA	\$5,080	\$28,258	\$8,783	\$28,870	\$15,116
Sales and service	\$16,114	\$5,103	\$21,346	\$10,287	\$27,523	\$13,462
Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations	\$20,516	\$7,639	\$31,102	\$14,025	\$43,954	\$25,937
Natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations	\$24,436	\$5,722	\$25,858	\$10,624	\$35,975	\$14,593
Manufacturing and utilities	\$18,494	\$4,787	\$35,771	\$12,863	\$43,436	\$23,590
Total	\$17,297	\$5,214	\$27,002	\$11,004	\$38,293	\$17,761

¹⁵ Statistics Canada, 2016 census, custom data order. All others includes those who worked part time and those who either did not work in 2015, worked prior to 2015, or worked in 2016 but not 2015. Cells with n/a represent suppressed data.



Summaries and Next Steps

This report has provided a high-level summary of common themes that emerged in youth employment strategies that have been developed in Ontario and beyond, in addition to local themes for youth employment. Recurring action items within those strategies include the following items:

- ✓ A demonstrated need for professional mentoring
- ✓ Ongoing formal and informal skill development for youth
- ✓ Changing the definition of entry-level employment
- ✓ Underscoring the positive influence of early access to career planning
- ✓ Addressing the hidden job market
- ✓ Enhancing labour market demand knowledge to inform skills training

The comprehensive companion piece to this document includes the relevant labour market data that would allow any front-line organization to focus their efforts on an aspect of these action items without having to conduct a comprehensive environmental scan. NWPB's ongoing activities in the upcoming year, including consultations with employers, sector organizations, local economic development organizations, and service providers, will allow us to add additional data to support local activities and further define priority sectors and occupations.

NWPB will also promote this strategy and this collective approach to addressing both the short-term and systemic issues of youth employment to any and all organizations who are interested in supporting youth employment. It is our hope that ongoing collaboration will support those who are best positioned to increase youth employment outcomes through training and program development. This will have an added benefit of reducing duplication of services and minimizing resources spent on replicating strategies that have already been developed and tested elsewhere.

Finally, NWPB will work with local stakeholders on the delivery of a regionally-focused workforce survey that will add insight to the third successful youth employment indicator outlined by the OECD: youth satisfaction with their employment. Understanding what accounts for employment satisfaction through a youth lens could prove beneficial to understanding "pull" factors for Niagara that would improve net-migration among younger demographics.