

BRIDGING THE GAP

A guide to supporting employers to hire and retain Opportunity Youth



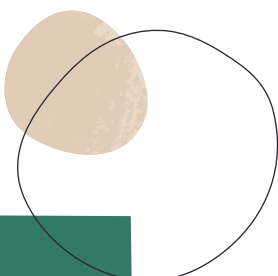
CALGARY YOUTH EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE



Introduction

In our previous publication, *Supporting Youth in Their Employment Journey: A guide for youth-serving practitioners*, we outlined ways to support Opportunity Youth to find and maintain employment. However, working with youth is only one side of the supply and demand equation. In this publication, we'll explore ways that youth serving practitioners can support employer partners to create positive working experiences for Opportunity Youth. Drawing on research as well as insights from Calgary-based youth employment professionals¹, we outline promising practices for:

- Identifying potential employer partners
- Engaging employers
- Preparing employers
- Providing ongoing support



Opportunity Youth are people between the ages of 18 and 29 who are not engaged in school, training, or the labour force. Many have experienced challenging circumstances in their lives that keep them disconnected from employment opportunities.

¹Special thanks to representatives from the following organizations for their contributions to this learning brief: Miskanawah, NPower Canada, Trellis, the Youth Employment Centre.

Identifying potential employer partners

Many Opportunity Youth have little to no work experience, which can make them a great fit for employers looking to fill entry-level positions. Retail, tourism, and food/beverage organizations tend to be ideal because they:

- Have lots of entry-level positions
- Struggle with recruiting and retention
- Do not require a lot of training
- Are not seasonal
- Don't usually require a driver's license or vehicle²

Other suitable employers might include automobile services (e.g., oil change outlets), construction trades, cleaning services, and organizations that require a large number of clerical staff.



“It’s really just making sure that the employers that we’re connected with are the employers who have positions for our participants. Because there’s a lot of employers in Calgary that wouldn’t have any need for entry level positions, [...] I usually don’t spend a lot of time bringing them on board because they’re too advanced for what we’re doing. But the more they know about us, the more they’ll tell others about us. So just really being strategic in our communications.”

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²Many Opportunity Youth do not have a driver's license, so it is important to find employers who are on a public transit route and do not require employees to travel to several locations throughout the day (e.g., as people working in trades tend to do).

It's important to recognize that not all employers with entry level positions are suitable for Opportunity Youth. When you research and meet with potential employer partners (more on that in a moment), you'll want to ensure that the organization:

- Is likely to be culturally safe for Indigenous, sexual/gender diverse, and racialized populations



A while back I sent out an email to connect with a new employer and did an initial meeting where I explained the program and told them that we support Indigenous people – and there was a bit of a tone of racism towards that. For example, when the employer was talking to me, they were drawing on all these stereotypes that they associate with Native people and asking questions based on that. And they referred to myself and others as ‘you people’ – things like that. So, I decided this can't be a partnership. I would never place one of our youth in their care.”

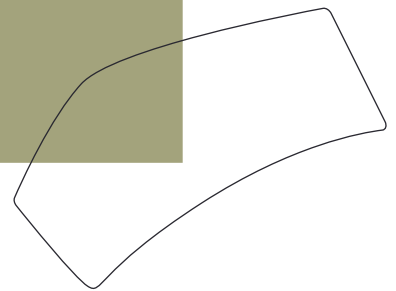
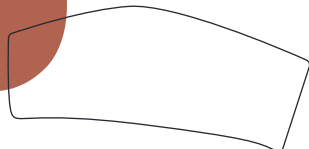
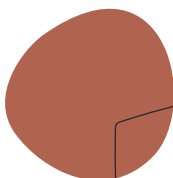
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- Does not expect its employees to ‘hit the ground running’ without any training or support
- Is not engaging Opportunity Youth only because there is a wage subsidy or some other grant available



I think we owe that to our youth [to screen employers] because they're trusting us. I was trying to place a youth with disabilities. I [met with an employer] that had a disability goal. They said, ‘we're thinking of dipping our toes into the disability pool – but only if they have a wage subsidy.’ I shy away from that because, in my experience, they'll keep them just while the wage subsidy is there and not after. [...] When building partnerships with employers, they have to be meaningful. They have to want to work with the youth you're working with.”

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Ideally, the employers you partner with will feel that investing in Opportunity Youth aligns with their mandate or values as an organization and is not just a way to solve their hiring issues. Strategies for identifying employer partners and building awareness of the services you offer include:

- Checking websites like *Youthjob*, *JobBank*, *Joblist*, *HireUp*, and *Indeed* to get a sense of employers with entry-level positions. (Calgary-based agencies may also want to check in with the *Calgary Employer Forum* [bit.ly/3HxF9wI] to find out which organizations are interested in hiring Opportunity Youth)
- Partnering with *Partnering with MyStarttr* (formerly *Opportunity for all Youth*), Canada's largest coalition of youth employers (bit.ly/3szmtmO)
- Attending job fairs and industry and/or human resource events
- Inviting representatives from local businesses to speak at an event at your organization
- Supporting successfully employed youth to present at industry events
- Disseminating a one-pager listing the benefits of employing Opportunity Youth, and extending an invitation to connect with you to talk about how you can help them meet their hiring and retention needs³
- Profiling Opportunity Youth success stories on your website and social media accounts
- Providing opportunities to showcase the employer on your website or through your newsletter
- Developing and distributing marketing materials outlining the services and supports you offer, as well as the benefits of working with you (These can be distributed at job fairs and industry events and/or posted online. They can also be left with prospective employers after your first meeting with them.)

For further ideas for connecting with potential employers, check out Raising the Roof's Community Agency Toolkit at bit.ly/3qQWL2a.



³See our previous brief about the benefits to help you develop content for your one-pager. Available at bit.ly/3CRh56e



“It’s all about relationship building. The better the relationship we have with HR, the more they will share with us – and the more we’re able to meet them where they’re at, to lessen their load. If we make their life easier they’ll come back to us because now it’s a meaningful relationship on both sides.”

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Engaging Employers

Relationship-building is central to building effective partnerships with employers. How do you create quality relationships with employers – ones that are mutually beneficial and lasting? In this section, we explore six principles to guide employer engagement:

1. Identifying the right people to meet with
2. Learning about their values, priorities, and culture
3. Starting with their needs, not yours
4. Outlining the potential benefits and risks
5. Showing appreciation
6. Thinking long-term

Each of these principles is briefly outlined below, along with concrete suggestions for how to apply the principles in practice.

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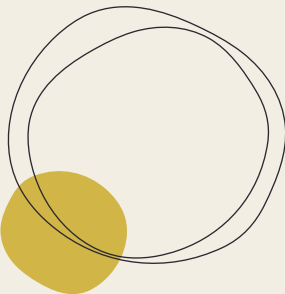
PRINCIPLE ONE

Identify the right people to meet with

Deciding who to meet with is relatively easy with smaller businesses: the owner, manager, or person in charge of HR is probably your best bet. If someone else will be directly supervising the youth you refer, then you might want to meet with them as well so you can help them prepare. Larger organizations can be trickier as you often need to meet with several people to garner buy-in from the 'top' (i.e., head office), as well as from key decision makers on the ground (e.g., hiring managers at the local level).

“A challenge we've had to learn to navigate is employers will [want to partner with us] and they're gung-ho, but then it doesn't translate to the local level, or even the general manager level at certain stores, so there's that disconnect around expectations, or why they're working with us, or whatever the case is. There's buy-in at the corporate level but not individually. So, we've had to really work on establishing those relationships.”

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If your contact is struggling to get buy-in from higher-ups, you might want to help them develop a business case. The *HireNext Roadmap* by Civic Action offers a helpful tip sheet for employers who need to create a business case for working with Opportunity Youth.⁴

Where applicable, you might also want to meet with union representatives as they may put up barriers if they believe that jobs are going to inexperienced youth rather than their members.⁵ This can be a particular concern in a tight economy. Face-to-face meetings are recommended wherever possible as they facilitate connections and give you an opportunity to get a sense of the work environment.

⁴“Building a Business Case: How do I have this Conversation?” p. 7, available at: Civic Action. *HireNext Roadmap: Navigating Your Way to Today's Top Talent*. Available at bit.ly/3LnvMmz (Note: To access this document, you need to register and log in).

⁵ Raising the Roof. (2020). *Community Agency Toolkit*, p. 13. Available at bit.ly/3qQWL2a

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PRINCIPLE TWO

Learn about their values, priorities, and culture

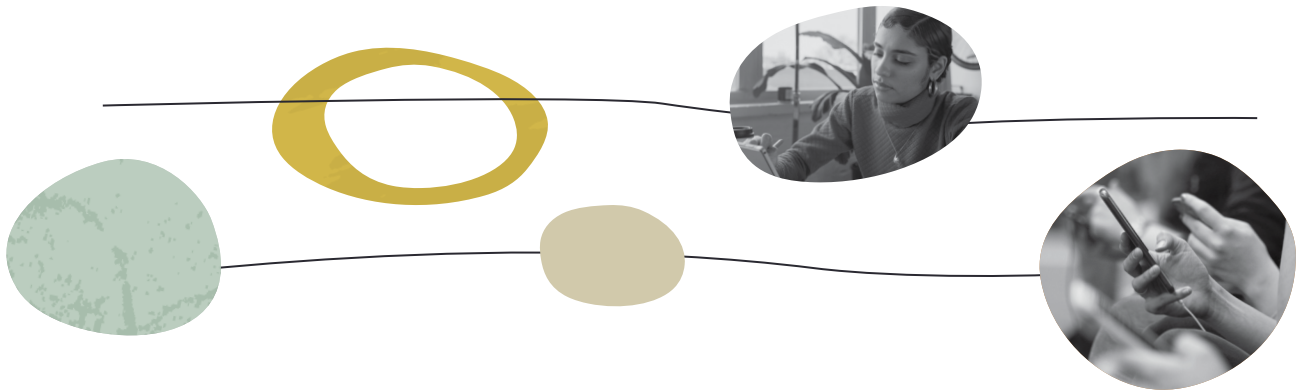
It takes some investigative work to learn about a company's values, priorities, and culture – but the more you understand the workplace environment, the better you can ensure a fit with the young people you are supporting.

“Before I go into a meeting with a new employer, I do my research. I look at their website, their social media so that I come prepared. When I do come into these meetings it's always with the intention to have a connected conversation with them versus just an information exchange. I tend to have a deeper conversation with them and then find out more about what their environment is like, what their values are like, what they need in terms of the types of employees they want to hire.

I always make sure that when I am walking away from meeting with an employer, I have my list of questions answered. Questions like: How many youth are you wanting to hire? Do they need any additional training? What kind of availability are you looking for? What are your interview processes like? What do they need to wear when they show up for an interview? Things like that so I have a full idea – so that the youth are well prepared and know what to expect – because that does support cultural safety and limits the anxiety the youth might feel going into a new situation like that. But really, it's all with the intention to connect and build a relationship with the employer.”

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Here are a few ways to familiarize yourself with an employers' values, priorities, culture, and diversity goals:

- Look at their social media, advertising, and website
- Read their press releases and annual reports
- Conduct site visits and observe what people do, how they dress, how they are supervised, and the ways they interact
- Ask if you can observe their onboarding and/or training
- Invite them in to present to your youth on the company's cultures and values

“We also invite employers into the classroom. We don't ask for anything specific – some just talk about their culture and don't talk about positions available. We leave it up to them. We have a Q&A at the end. It's a chance for them to get to see the cohort, how they interact, how they ask questions, are they dressed in professional clothing, etc.”

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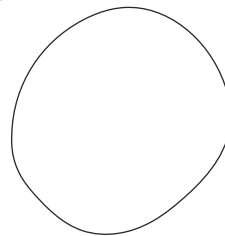
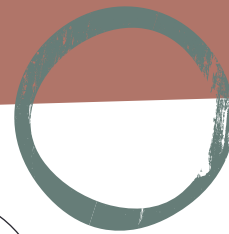
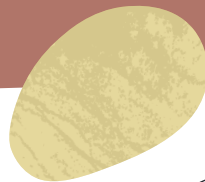
PRINCIPLE THREE

Start with their needs, not yours

One of the best ways to build relationships with employers is to focus on their needs rather than your own. What hiring challenges are they facing? Where could they use some support? Is there anything you can offer them to signal that you are wanting to build a relationship with them that is not simply transactional?

“We look for ways to connect with the employer that are not just about getting our youth hired. We might offer to feature them in an *Employer Spotlight* on our website or invite them to showcase their company/industry through a Career Café or some other career exploration event. Referrals can be a great way of building the relationship – so, we might refer them to other hiring fairs that would be a good fit for them or we’ll tell them about seminars or educational opportunities.”

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Youth serving professionals risk creating service provider fatigue among employers when the youth serving professionals focus solely on meeting their own targets and putting young people forward who are not a fit for the company.

“Some of the employers I’ve reached out to have service provider fatigue. Everyone is knocking on their door [and] I’ve had employers say that the person put forward for the job doesn’t have skill set required and it feels like the service provider was just trying to meet quotas but wasn’t meeting their needs. Some won’t work with providers as a result of that.”

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While we do not recommend starting your first conversation with an employer by asking about specific service needs, at some point you will want to gather information on the following:

- Type and number of position(s) they are trying to fill
- Skills/qualifications required
- Prerequisites (e.g., Driver’s License, vehicle, criminal background check)
- Number of hours employee needs to be available each week
- Location (i.e., is it accessible by public transit?)
- Shift times
- Dress code
- Hiring process and interview questions
- Onboarding or training



PRINCIPLE FOUR

Outline the potential benefits and risks



There are many benefits associated with hiring Opportunity Youth, including the opportunity to address talent shortages, make a positive social contribution, increase diversity, employ people who comprise the majority of their customer base, and potentially double retention rates.⁶

“If employers understood that Opportunity Youth are their customers as well and they have a lot to learn from them, that would be a game changer for a lot of employers.”

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Be sure to highlight these benefits and address the employer’s fears or concerns – but don’t do it in a way that is dishonest or minimizes the potential challenges or risks. (We’ll address this in more detail in *Preparing Employers*, below). Honesty is critical to your relationship with the employer and helps to ensure that you are creating conditions in which Opportunity Youth can thrive.

Untapped Talent: Exploring the Benefits of Opportunity Youth for Employers was written to support employment professionals in conveying some of the advantages of working with Opportunity Youth. In addition to explaining the benefits when you meet with them, you might want to send them a link to the resource or bring a hard copy with you to leave behind.

Because there are many myths about Opportunity Youth, you might also want to share the *Raising the Roof Employer Toolkit* with them. This resource responds to some of the myths that exist, while also outlining the benefits and potential risks of working with Opportunity Youth.

Resource: bit.ly/2UcCCFL

⁶Wartzman, R. “Why opportunity youth are more reliable than most millennials in the workforce.” Fast Company, May 25, 2018. Available at bit.ly/2VppAhX

It can also be helpful to outline the benefits of working with your organization. The valuable (and usually free) services and supports that community partners offer can include:

- Helping employers access harder-to-reach youth or youth in communities where the company doesn't have a strong presence

“In my experience with [our program] being unique and directed to Indigenous young people, that's definitely an interesting point for employers because it allows them to interact with the Indigenous community and collaborate, especially with urban Indigenous people. They can find them a challenging population to connect with – they want to hire more Indigenous youth, but they don't know how. We can help.”

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- Providing youth training (including technical skills and soft skills like time management, interpersonal skills, collaboration, conflict management, etc.)
- Helping them to make their recruiting and hiring processes more youth-friendly
- Pre-screening applicants

“We pre-screen [youth], which takes the burden off [the employer]. We go and figure out the [employer's] culture and figure out who will fit that. We do a thorough assessment that lets us know where the young person lands in terms of what they would be interested in [and what their skills are].”

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- Conducting mock interviews so that candidates are better prepared and more likely to be committed to the process

- Facilitating customized hiring events with pre-screened candidates

“We organize virtually all aspects of the [hiring] event so the employer doesn’t have to do much except show up to conduct the interviews [and] we get high turnout rates for the interviews we set up. Interviews for entry level jobs have high ‘no-show’ rates – about 40%, whereas we get a very high turnout – usually 95-100% – and those who can’t make it usually contact us ahead to let us know. This is a big selling feature for recruiters.”

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- Giving them free publicity (partners often highlight success stories and feature the employer in their newsletters, social media, and websites)
- Employer training (e.g., cultural safety training, trauma-informed management training, working with Opportunity Youth, etc.)
- Real-time problem solving and follow up support for employers and youth

“[I tell employers] ‘I’m here for you as well – if you need feedback or information, I’m here to support you with that.’ We’re here to support success on the employers’ side and success on the youth’s side.”

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PRINCIPLE FIVE

Show appreciation

Another key aspect of relationship building with employers (or anyone for that matter) is to show appreciation. This can take many forms including:

- Highlighting employer achievements in your print and online communications (e.g., number of Opportunity Youth they've employed through your partnership, ways that they have adapted their processes to be more youth-friendly, etc.)
- Publicly sharing success stories (e.g., stories of youth who have thrived in their positions with the employer, or ways that the job has helped to turn a young person's life around)
- Hosting employer award ceremonies
- Showing up with a box of chocolates and a thank you card

“What I've seen is that the success stories are huge – the story of empowering these young people. [...] I think sometimes we miss that because we're so focused on the operational end of it – so that's something for sure that's important – to make sure we do capture those stories.”

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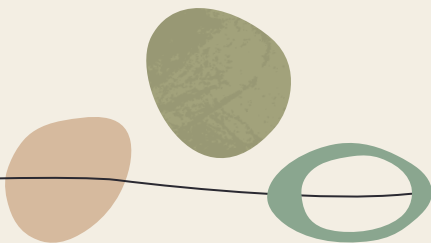
PRINCIPLE SIX

Think long-term

The last piece of advice for engaging employers is to think of your relationships with them as long-term and lay the foundation for something more than a transactional or one-off encounter. All of the strategies listed above will help you to do that, but it's also important to go into meetings with that framing in mind because it will help you to take time to get to know the employer, understand their hopes and needs, and demonstrate that you are interested in a true partnership.

“It’s a long-term relationship. We’re not a one and done. We want to stay working with them, we want this to be a collaboration that’s meaningful on both sides. We’re not just a box to tick to get someone employed. We want to help with whatever we can along the way, and if an employer needs support to help someone to stay on board, we’re there with that. If they have someone they need to let go, we’re there to help with that as well. So that we’re a partner in this. [...] We want them to see that we’re here for the long haul.”

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Preparing employers

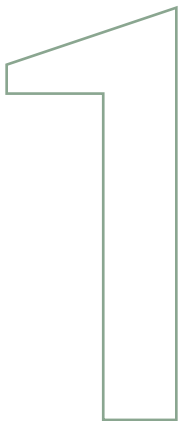
Outlining the many benefits associated with Opportunity Youth is crucial, but it is also important to be upfront about the potential challenges that can arise when working with this population. Below, we outline two key challenges and offer suggestions for ways that employers can mitigate these risks. We encourage you to work through these strategies with employers as a way of preparing them and creating the conditions for success.



Honesty is critical. When employers understand any risks they are assuming they can build a realistic picture of what will be required of them and plan with the agency for any supports they may need. Be as upfront as you can about the youth's background, skill level and any significant personal barriers that may impact their work. Obviously this must be done in a way that respects the youth's dignity and right to privacy. [...] Be clear with employers about:

- 1. The supports they can expect from you.** Is someone from the agency readily available if a problem arises? How much support can you provide to help the youth settle into the job? What about three months or six months later?
- 2. Your expectations of them.** What barriers are they willing to work through? Which ones are they not willing to tackle? What supports, orientation and training will they provide? Will they provide regular, constructive feedback?"

RAISING THE ROOF. COMMUNITY AGENCY TOOLKIT, P. 4. Available at bit.ly/3qQWL2a



CHALLENGE ONE

Barriers associated with negative life experiences and/or mental health issues

Many Opportunity Youth have encountered significant life challenges, including poverty, racism, childhood trauma, homelessness, and mental health issues. These challenges can sometimes impact punctuality, attendance, confidence, and performance at work.



There are pros and cons to hiring any employee – not just youth who are disadvantaged. But it's a good idea to be aware of and prepared for both."

RAISING THE ROOF. (2020). EMPLOYER TOOLKIT, P. 1. Available at bit.ly/2UcCCFL

Strategies employers can use to mitigate this risk

- Realistically assessing the readiness of their company (e.g., resources, culture, commitment) to engage with Opportunity Youth

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Opportunity Nation has developed a great tool to help employers assess readiness and resources for working with Opportunity Youth. See “Step One: Assess and Select” in *Connecting Youth and Businesses: A Toolkit for Employers* (pp. 20-25).

Available at bit.ly/2VILgw2

- Partnering with a youth-serving agency that can provide ongoing coaching, problem-solving and resources
- Training managerial staff on trauma-informed practices
- Engaging in cultural safety training

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Youth who have been involved in the justice system, experienced poverty or homelessness, or have been victims of violence, abuse, or discrimination are likely to have been subject to trauma that may impact their ability to successfully enter or keep employment. It is important to understand how opportunity youth who have experienced trauma may respond to events or situations in workplace settings that trigger responses to trauma and to ensure that programming and work experience do not re-traumatize participants. Moreover, it is critically important to educate employer partners about how to avoid and respond to triggers in the workplace.”

WARLAND, C., ET AL. (2015). PROVIDING TRUE OPPORTUNITY FOR OPPORTUNITY YOUTH: PROMISING PRACTICES AND PRINCIPLES FOR HELPING YOUTH FACING BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT, P. 14. Available at bit.ly/3bISdBY

- Considering the types of workplace accommodations the employer can provide and letting “all hires know that accommodations are possible as some may not feel empowered to ask.”⁷ Encourage them to “open the door for conversation so that these can be clarified and understood early and addressed well in advance”⁸
- Treating youth with dignity and respect

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When we interviewed [Indigenous youth in our program], all we heard over and over again was that they just want to be treated with respect and kindness. With the amount of racism that they encounter every day, just someone treating them like normal human beings was all it took.”

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⁷ Civic Action. HireNext Case Study: RBC – Banking on the Right Talent. Available at bit.ly/3rDINC6, p. 4

⁸ *ibid.*

- Placing Opportunity Youth in a supportive environment with managers who have strong people skills and are truly committed to helping Opportunity Youth succeed⁹

“Getting off to a great and supportive start can make all the difference for a youth who likely struggles with self confidence and trust. Putting in extra effort at the start can result in long term payoff and a dependable staff [member].”

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- Helping managers to understand that Opportunity Youth will often thrive when treated with compassion, patience, and respect, and that this opportunity can be life changing

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These youth are [...] called ‘opportunity youth’ because they represent tremendous opportunities for employers, communities, and the nation. The research tells us that opportunity youth are motivated to overcome the barriers they face, but they need support.”

OPPORTUNITY NATION. CONNECTING YOUTH AND BUSINESS: A TOOLKIT FOR EMPLOYERS.
Available at bit.ly/2VILgw2

- Developing a positive relationship with the youth and encouraging them to let their supervisor know about issues that may impact their performance (e.g., transportation issues, family responsibilities, etc.)
- Checking assumptions about a young person’s commitment to the job (e.g., based on occasional punctuality issues, etc.) and instead working to understand the situation and help to identify a workable solution

“One of my youth had to take five buses in the morning to get to work and were half hour late sometimes because of the bus schedule and all the moving parts. The employer actually worked with the youth and moved their start time an hour later so they’d have a bit of extra time before starting shift.”

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⁹Civic Action. HireNext Case Study: RBC – Banking on the Right Talent. Available at bit.ly/3rDINC6, p. 4

- Building a relationship with the young person so that they can potentially be more open about the challenges that might be interfering with work
- Consulting with the referring employment agency if concerning behaviours arise that cannot be addressed by speaking with the youth as the agency might be able to help problem-solve

“There was a young man [that we placed] who came to work wearing a black shirt inside out. The employer lost it – but turns out it was the only black shirt he had and he didn’t want the logo seen, so he turned it inside out. Once the employer found that out, they were more than happy to supply the black shirt – it was actually a clothing store, so it was easy to do that. “So we’ll prepare [employers] ahead of time – and get them to stop and think through how to have those conversations manage those situations.”

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CHALLENGE TWO

Lack of confidence and/or experience

Many Opportunity Youth are new to the workforce and have not had an opportunity to develop workplace skills or professional etiquette.

Strategies employers can use to mitigate this risk

- Partnering with a youth-serving employment agency that provides training for Opportunity Youth so that new hires have an opportunity to acquire workplace skills
- Providing job shadowing opportunities or paid internships so that young people can acquire the skills they need

- Scheduling additional time for orientation and training, including “regular touch points with Opportunity Youth to ensure that their first months on the job are progressing smoothly”¹⁰

HireNext Roadmap: Navigating Your Way to Today's Talent has a couple of excellent onboarding tip sheets designed to help employers make the onboarding experience welcoming and effective, including tips to prepare for the youth's first day of work (“Onboarding: What Happens Before Day 1?”) and a checklist to support them in the first three months (“Onboarding Checklist for the First 90 Days”). We encourage you to share these with employers!

Available at bit.ly/zUa8Dhx

- Identifying employee volunteers who are interested in honing their leadership skills by facilitating workshops on professionalism (e.g., punctuality, appearance, etc.) and the development of soft skills (e.g., communication, seeking and integrating feedback, time management, etc.)¹¹
- Pairing youth with peer mentors
- Setting clear (but reasonable) expectations
- Training managers to be able to identify whether an employee requires additional support¹²

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Mentorship programs [...] have significant business value. They help organizations increase retention, reduce absenteeism, and save money. 42% of back-house employees in hospitality leave within their first 90 days of employment. Mentorship can help young people feel more confident and ready for their roles”

CIVIC ACTION. CASE STUDY: TORONTO DON VALLEY HOTEL & SUITES – A CAREER WITH NO RESERVATIONS

- Providing early and effective onboarding, including communication strategies, expectations of staff (e.g., attire, appropriate break conversations/topics, etc.), and how to respond to problems that might arise (e.g., what to do when they are running late due to transportation issues)
- Checking assumptions about what youth may or may not know, taking time to explain things, encouraging them to ask questions, and responding positively when they do
- Reminding managers that “skills can be learned.” What's important is “the youth's attitude and willingness to learn”¹³
- Drawing on a strength-based approach

¹⁰ Civic Action. *HireNext Roadmap: Navigating Your Way to Today's Top Talent* Available at bit.ly/3oytHds, p. 30.

¹¹ Connecting Youth and Business: A Toolkit for Employers. Available at bit.ly/2VILgw2

¹² Civic Action. *HireNext Case Study: RBC – Banking on the Right Talent*. Available at bit.ly/3rHAbsJ, p. 3

¹³ Raising the Roof. (2020). *Employer Toolkit*. Available at bit.ly/2UcCCFL, p. 6

While being realistic about the potential challenges involved in working with Opportunity Youth is important, you'll also need to make sure that you put these risks into perspective. For example, there are risks associated with any new hire – and the risks associated with hiring Opportunity Youth who have been supported by an agency will often be lower than hiring a youth who has not had the benefit of that coaching and training. (Plus, the employer has all the benefits of working with you!)

You may also need to explore any misconceptions employers might have, using research data to counter prevailing myths. For example, some employers feel that Opportunity Youth will not perform as well as others their age. However, a US study of 600 Opportunity Youth debunked that myth, showing that they “often perform at the same level as or better than those currently employed in entry-level jobs. Using a predicative model that measures various quantifiable job skills and attributes, the study showed a large number of opportunity youth to be high job performers.”¹⁴

For more information on addressing myths associated with Opportunity Youth, see the “Myth-nomers” section of the HireNext Roadmap (pp. 5-6) available at bit.ly/2Ua8Dhx

Ongoing support

Getting a job is a great outcome for the youth you work with, but keeping it is equally important. You can play a role in supporting job retention by continuing to offer post-hiring support (as needed) to both youth and employers:

- **Youth Supports:** Ask youth if you can check in with them occasionally for the first few months of their new job to see how things are going, and encourage them to reach out if they run into problems or frustrations. Remind them that they will encounter frustrations – everyone does with a new job – but frustration is a good sign because it means they are operating at their growing edge. Give them strategies for managing negative feelings and remind them that they can reach out to you for support if they need it.
- **Employer Supports:** Let employers know you are there for them should any questions or issues arise, and offer them the option of regular progress meetings or check-ins. (Note: Employers are busy and may view this as a burden rather than a support – so ease into this conversation gently and only if you think the employer will see this as a benefit rather than a burden). Give the employer examples of the types of things they can consult with you on (e.g., onboarding, case-by-case problem-solving, offering feedback in a trauma-informed way, etc.). You might even want to develop a handout outlining the supports you offer, and encourage them to keep it posted somewhere near their desk.

¹⁴ Civic Action. *HireNext Roadmap: Navigating Your Way to Today's Top Talent*. Available at bit.ly/2Ua8Dhx, p. 6.

Conclusion

While preparing Opportunity Youth to enter the workforce is critical, it's also important to ensure that employers are well positioned to attract and retain this population. We hope the suggestions in this brief help you to better identify, engage, prepare, and support employers in your area.

For further suggestions and tools that may be helpful for employers, check out the following resources:

- **Civic Action.** *HireNext Roadmap: Navigating Your Way to Today's Top Talent.* Available at bit.ly/3oytHds (Note: To access this document, you need to register and log in).
- **Raising the Roof.** (2020). *Employer Toolkit.* Available at bit.ly/2UcCCFL

About the Collaborative Funders' Table

In 2017, the Collaborative Funders' Table (CFT) launched a collaborative funding initiative with the goal of improving employment prospects for Opportunity Youth in Calgary. The initiative focuses on the interface between 'supply' (youth and youth serving agencies) and 'demand' (employers). The goal is to ensure that youth seeking work are better prepared to meet the needs of employers, and that employers are better able to recruit and retain youth. For more information on the Calgary Youth Employment Initiative (CYEI) and resources related to Opportunity Youth employment please go to bit.ly/3lVGRd6

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