



Summary of the Horizontal Evaluation of the Youth Employment and Skills Strategy



Strategy's objectives

The Youth Employment and Skills Strategy (the Strategy) helps young people (between the ages of 15 and 30), particularly those facing barriers to employment, get the information and gain the skills, work experience and abilities they need to make a successful transition into the labour market. The Department of Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) leads the horizontal initiative, which involves 11 other federal departments, agencies, and Crown corporations.

The Strategy consists of 2 components.

Youth Employment and Skills Strategy Program (YESSP) provides funding to organizations to deliver a range of interventions that help youth overcome barriers to employment and develop a broad range of skills and knowledge to participate in the current and future labour market.

Canada Summer Jobs (CSJ) targets youth to participate in summer work placements, supported by mentorship. It provides wage subsidies to employers for small businesses, not-for-profit organizations, and the public sector.



Strategy investment

The Strategy represents a total funding allocation of almost \$5.2 billion between fiscal years 2019 to 2020 and 2024 to 2025. ESDC receives over 72% of the total funding allocation.



Evaluation objectives

The aim of this evaluation is to:

- Determine the early results achieved by the Strategy

- Examine issues pertaining to governance, implementation and performance measurement



Evaluation methodology

The findings are drawn from multiple lines of evidence, including:

- Outcomes and incremental impacts for CSJ participants who began an intervention between 2019 and 2020 and YESSP participants in 2020
- Literature and document reviews
- Key informant interviews with YESS federal partners
- Questionnaire to all YESS federal partners
- Focus groups with recent youth participants
- Administrative data assessment
- Summaries from federal partners



Key findings

CSJ:

- Outcome trends (analysis without a comparison group) show increases in participants' employment levels and employment earnings from before to after participation.
- On average, incremental impacts (analysis using a comparison group) demonstrate that, in the short-term, CSJ participation strengthens the labour market attachment of youth participants relative to similar non-participants through increases in incidence of employment and employment earnings (second year post-program). In addition, CSJ participants decrease their dependence on government income supports (that is the combination of



social assistance and Employment Insurance benefits).

- Overall, CSJ is a good policy tool to assist youth in integrating into the labour market, as it makes some contribution to facilitating the transition from school to employment.

YESSP:

- Labour market outcome trends for YESSP participants shows increases in employment levels and earnings from before to after the program. The outcome trends point to the importance of offering a work experience to participants, especially participants with lower levels of education.
- Incremental impacts show that, on average, participation in a work experience through a subsidized work placement, either alone or in combination with skills training, increases the probability being employed for youth. Participating in a skills training alone, on average, does not strengthen the labour market attachment of youth.
- Examination of incremental impacts over the medium-term is needed to fully understand the impacts of YESSP interventions on participants.

The evaluation also found:

Strategy's implementation: Federal partners identified implementation changes made to their programs in response to Strategy modernization, including expanding their programs' reach to target youth facing employment barriers.

Strategy's governance: Federal partners acknowledge the importance of ESDC's role in coordinating and providing guidance on budget proposals and policy changes, and implementation of the new Performance Measurement Framework. Federal partners also identified areas for improvement, such as ESDC playing a bigger role in promoting collaboration and fostering horizontal information sharing.

Performance measurement: An examination of targets and results found that almost all YESS federal partners achieved or surpassed their targeted outputs and outcomes. Data collection and reporting challenges were

identified by federal partners, including a lack of a centralized data collection system to securely upload participant data to ESDC.

Federal partners' evaluations and reviews:

Results of evaluations and internal reviews were provided by 6 partners for inclusion in the horizontal evaluation report. Overall, evidence points to program participation assisting youth in developing skills to help them in finding employment. High levels of satisfaction with the program are reported by both participants and employers/sponsors. Some federal partners point to challenges in administering the program due to late funding decisions.



Recommendations

The evaluation made the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1: It is recommended that ESDC and YESS federal partners clarify roles and responsibilities in terms of data collection and evaluation. This includes the responsibility of ESDC regarding the scope of the horizontal evaluation and that of all federal partners when it comes to evaluate and publicly report on the impacts and effectiveness of their programs and services.

Recommendation 2: It is recommended that ESDC's Skills and Employment Branch pursue efforts to maintain and strengthen data collection provisions in support of YESS reporting, performance measurement and data-driven evaluations. To that regard, ESDC should:

- Establish a new YESS data collection system with appropriate privacy and legal provisions, and information sharing agreements
- Ensure that proper data elements are collected by all partners to allow for contacting participants for the conduct of qualitative lines of evidence (including surveys) and linking responses to administrative data
- Prioritize data integrity, including validating data uploads and documenting changes over time