

# discovery

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## takeaways

Youth are at a formative period of their lives where they are trying to discover who they are. They want to connect with others and be understood in order to explore their identity in the wider community. If the City of Surrey wants to engage youth “on their terms,” empathizing and building an authentic relationship with them is crucial to helping them accomplish their goal.

From our research, we derived the following insights:

- Sharing an activity with friends is a significant motivator towards continued commitment to a community group, as people want to feel connected. [refer to page 2] ↗
- The government does not seem approachable because of a lack of back-and-forth. If people were to feel acknowledged, they would be much more inclined to engage. [refer to page 3] ↗
- Individuals and communities are mutually dependent in that they both derive their identities from each other. [refer to page 4] ↗



# insight breakdown **connecting**

Sharing an activity with friends is a significant motivator towards continued commitment to a community group, as people want to feel connected.

## 01 patterns

### people favour programs with close friends

**H Lam** [refer to page 6] ↗

21, university student and former cadet during his highschool years.

“ You get paid if you’re good enough. But, I made friends there, and they made it enjoyable.

**J Lau** [refer to page 6] ↗

23, university student involved in the figure skating community.

“ As I got older, I found that being a part of the community is so much more than just a sport, it’s like all the bonding and all the memories that come with it.

### discoveries

### need for human connection

Our initial assumption was that youth prefer to hang out with their friends instead of going to community events. We noticed a pattern between the two interviews: people favoured programs with close friends.

## 02 patterns

### people want friends

**Case Study: Vancouver**

[refer to page 7] ↗

Vancouver ranked lowest in life satisfaction out of 33 metropolitan areas. Attributed to a lack of deep and meaningful relationships.

**Case Study: York**

[refer to page 7] ↗

In 2017, 37 percent of respondents said they felt socially isolated, and 62 percent wanted more contact with family and friends.

### discoveries

### need for human connection

Branching into the city scale, these case studies reaffirmed the importance of a social support structure to human satisfaction.

Realizing this fundamental need for human connection, we saw an opportunity to shift the primary focus from engaging with the city, to the city facilitating youth engagement with each other. This engages youth on their terms leading to deeper investment into their communities, which also addresses the wider problem of loneliness in Vancouver.

## 03 actionable insight

### people are more willing to participate in activities if friends are involved as well

### future direction

- include opportunities to communicate

With this insight, we hope to include opportunities for youth to communicate with each other.



insight breakdown  
**acknowledgment**

The government does not seem approachable because of a lack of back-and-forth. If people were to feel acknowledged, they would be much more inclined to engage.

**01** patterns

**no engagement with governments due to complexity**

**D Gupta** [refer to page 6] ↗

45, Licensed Clinical Social Worker,  
Director at non-profit organization

Homeless veterans could not navigate complex bureaucratic structure to receive their benefits.

“ These organizations were working by the book, and in order to truly help them [homeless veterans], we had to first understand them.

**Case Study: London**

[refer to page 7] ↗

The City created a hub for citizens to propose and contribute to projects to address the barrier in communication.

**discoveries**

**cognitive overload**

Based on our experience, we assumed that people don't engage with the government because of a perceived time and effort. After interviewing D Gupta, we realized that disconnects were frequently stemming from the government's lack of effective communication. Following an informal survey with Surrey youth, we noticed a similar disconnect between them and the City of Surrey.

**02** patterns

**successful collaboration**

**Case Study: London**

[refer to page 7] ↗

Engaged residents and local businesses with a buy-in of their money, ideas, and time to invoke long term commitment.

**D Gupta** [refer to page 6] ↗

45, Licensed Clinical Social Worker,  
Director at non-profit organization

Worked with homeless veterans around their needs in order to secure benefits.

**discoveries**

**previous investment, cognitive overload**

London faced a similar issue with residents not having a meaningful say in the government process. Their solution was to build a hub for people to invest their time, money, and ideas.

London, in the same way as D Gupta, was able to communicate and collaborate with citizens effectively by establishing their process around people's needs and wants.

**03**

**actionable insight**

**people want to be acknowledged when engaging with the government**

**future direction**

- setbacks, progress, and any feedback should be communicated
- include opportunities to communicate
- youth preferred communication channels
- process should actively involve youth

By structuring governmental communication to assist people, the time and cognitive effort needed to navigate the bureaucratic nature of government is minimized, leading to more trust and investment into the government and community.



insight breakdown  
**identity**

Individuals and communities are mutually dependent in that they both derive their identities from each other.

**01** patterns

people grew up in program, returned in later years

**H Lam** [refer to page 6] ↗

21, university student and former cadet during his highschool years.

“ Yeah, I became a Leader at AWANA after ‘graduating’ as a clubber. Eventually, I ended up sticking around long enough to be a Director as the others retired.

**J Lau** [refer to page 6] ↗

28, university student involved in the figure skating community.

“ I joined the community when I was very young which was 2 and a half, but I started to give back to the community through coaching when I was 19.

discoveries

community shapes individual identity, previous investment, cognitive overload

We started by conducting interviews with youth, in an attempt to understand what successful engagement looked like. During these interviews, we instead found a similarity between our interviewees: the tendency to return to a program they grew up in.

Being enrolled by their parents at a young age caused them to identify with their respective communities. We discovered that a person's identity is influenced significantly by the social communities they participate in, even more so than just the one they were born into.

**02**

actionable insight

community is also influenced by individual actions

future direction


— use feedback to take iterative action that reflects evolving identity

We also noticed the significant impact our interviewees had on their communities through their actions, and that this influence of identity wasn't a one way street. While perhaps their role as coach was much more of a direct influence, we realized actions of individuals are what ultimately influence a community's social dogma.

By understanding that the government identity is closely linked to its people, and that people aren't static characters, government policies and initiatives should be versatile and continuously changing as to the community's needs.



appendix  
process overview



**H Lam**

*21, university student and former cadet during his highschool years.*

**“ You get paid if you’re good enough. But, I made friends there, and they made it enjoyable.**

Lam’s perception of government as a necessary decision-making body was formed primarily through his time as a cadet. He initially progressed through the ranks for monetary incentives, but instead found deeper connections which became his core motivation for staying and advancing.

**J Lau**

*23, university student involved in the figure skating community.*

**“ As I got older, I found that being a part of the community is so much more than just a sport, it’s like all the bonding and all the memories that come with it.**

Lau has been involved from a young age due to her parents’ decision to enroll her into lessons. Throughout the years, she has gained and maintained many relationships even after halting her athletic pursuit. Missing the sport and the family she gained through it, she returned to the community she was familiar with in the form of coaching. She is also interested in volunteering in other communities, however, is unsure of where to find opportunities to do so.

**D Gupta**

*45, Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Director at non-profit organization in California, USA.*

**“ These organizations were working by the book, and in order to truly help them [homeless veterans], we had to first understand them.**

Gupta managed a federally funded mental health and substance abuse healthcare clinic aimed at assisting disabled homeless veterans access government resources. Realizing the uncertain nature of a homeless veteran’s daily life, her team offered individualized and flexible services, enabling more veterans to navigate the government’s bureaucratic procedures and get the help they deserved. As a result, these veterans invited their friends that were in similar situations to receive the same assistance.



### **Case Study: Crowdfund London**

London was facing new pressures on the city's environment, infrastructure, housing, and jobs. Authorities established Crowdfund London as a communication hub designed to engage residents and companies with a buy-in and as a place where their opinions and ideas can have an appreciable effect on the final outcome. Through this hub, citizens could propose and contribute to community projects, and get the City's assistance in "designing, planning, building relationships, and [their] offered financial support..." Seeing real change and having an investment in the projects led volunteers to engaging on a long-term basis. With low turnover, collaboration over an extended time period was possible between the city and volunteers, leading to more effective solutions.

### **Case Study: York, U.K.**

York is an example of a city overcome by loneliness and taking action to address it. The city employed several solutions, including training and assigning citizens to be points of contacts for those vulnerable to "experiencing mental health needs or disabilities" and the GoodGym York program, which "paired younger runners with older citizens..." This case study stresses the importance of the effect of having meaningful human connections to our mental health.

### **Vancouver: The Saddest City in Canada**

Statistics Canada released a survey, with 340,000 responses collected between 2009 and 2013, revealing that Vancouver ranked lowest in life satisfaction out of 33 census metropolitan areas. This was attributed to a lack of deep and meaningful relationships, resulting in respondents rating their life satisfaction to be lower than other places.

### **Exposure and affect: A Field Experiment**

The mere-exposure effect, developed by scholar Robert Zajonc in the 1960s is a phenomenon that states "repeated exposure to a novel object increases the preference for the object." A study conducted within a 25-day period involved a series of unfamiliar words where students were prompted daily to determine on a scale whether they mean something 'good' or 'bad.' These words, some more than others, appeared in daily newspapers the students were exposed to and based on the frequency of its appearance, the word steadily gained higher ratings due to its familiarity. In this case, what we are constantly exposed to becomes associated with more 'good' than 'bad' and increases our preference towards it.



## surveys and questionnaires

### Questionnaire for the City of Surrey

Our questionnaire aims to gauge the City of Surrey's attitude towards youth, their programs, their image, and their communication methods. It was answered by the Youth Coordinator for the City of Surrey. The city's vision is a inclusive, collaborative, and widespread relationship with the youth (ages 13-18). With these goals in mind, the city wants to engage youth in a meaningful way, to support them while building their leadership capacity. To build the youth's leadership capacity, and a positive connection to their community, they recognize that youth need to be a part of the decision making process for "good return or turnout." They see themselves as an example for other municipalities to look to for best practices.

### Survey for Surrey Youth

Surrey youth were sent a Survey to assess their thoughts on their community and government, as well as gauging their involvement with them. The findings show that regardless of their involvement in community events, youth, in general, don't seem to have a meaningful relationship with the City of Surrey. Almost a quarter would agree that the City is doing well in involving youth to be a part of the community, and yet more than half cannot remember the last time the City of Surrey visited them or their school. This indicates a gap between the youth and the City.



## citations

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