Improving Inclusion & Access to Tech Employment in Toronto

Challenging assumptions, navigating barriers and developing strategies to unleash untapped talent of homeless youth for the tech job market.

NOVEMBER 2018 CONSULTATION RESULTS

OVERVIEW

Toronto's tech sector is one of the largest growing in North America, tech employers and recruiters are increasingly interested in attracting 'untapped talent' to address growing demand, yet the possibility of young people who experience homelessness helping to meet this demand can often be prematurely dismissed.

On November 27, 2018, the Accelerator Project brought together 25+ participants from Toronto's tech industry and social services/non-profit sector to help understand why this was the case and ideate on strategies to remove barriers for homeless youth in accessing the tech job market.

Part 1: Identify Barriers & Challenging Assumptions

Participants were encouraged to examine their biases and assumptions through design techniques and exercises - such as mind-mapping - and group discussion.

Part 2: Ideate Strategies

Participants used Feedback Frames to brainstorm ideas to overcome barriers identified in Part 1.

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RESULTS - KEY BARRIERS & STRATEGIES

SELF-ESTEEM
Ensure youth feel empowered by negating / addressing the impacts of trauma, discrimination, and other circumstances they may face → **develop network of mentors / role models; support participants through active case management**

MENTAL HEALTH
Equip both trainers and employers to support mental health needs that are disproportionately present in this population → **select hiring partners with internal experience supporting diverse populations; continue program supports post hiring**

SKILLS & EXPERIENCE
"Hard-skills" are clearly a critical component, but important "soft-skills" required to obtain and maintain employment are often overlooked → **teach clients how to present in an interview and create a digital presence on Github, Linkedin, etc.**

INDUSTRY NETWORKS
Networks are key for accessing "hidden job market" in tech, as well as supporting further skill-building; program needs to pursue community inclusion, not just employment → **identify sponsors / buddy-systems in tech to support participants)**

CULTURAL / ROLE FIT
"Gig economy" prevalent in tech but precarious nature of employment may be a poor fit for this population that needs / craves stability → **co-design projects / roles with employers to ensure some continuity between jobs**

BASIC NEEDS
Unreasonable to expect youth to focus on long-term objectives such as skill-building or employment if basic near-term needs are not adequately met → **program needs to offer necessities (housing, food, finances) in order to be successful**

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WHAT'S NEXT?

The Accelerator Project is seeking employers, social services and other partners interested in program co-design and delivery.

If your organization is interested in working with or supporting the Accelerator Project, please contact us!

For more information, contact us at:

email: hello@acceleratorproject.xyz | **web:** acceleratorproject.xyz