

• F O U N D R Y •

# Foundry Work and Education Activity Report 2022–2023

Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

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# Foundry Work and Education Program Activity Report

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# Foundry Work and Education Activity Report

## Executive Summary

The Foundry Work and Education program is changing the landscape of youth employment and education supports in BC. Through an integrated service model, youth participating in the Foundry Work and Education program can access high-quality health care and social supports in one place, by one team. For youth experiencing multiple and complex mental health, substance use, and social challenges, this type of support is essential to navigating and overcoming the significant barriers they face to meaningful employment, education, and training. In addition to high levels of psychological distress, anxiety, depression, and substance use challenges, youth in the Work and Education program often represent youth who are racialized, gender and sexually diverse, neurodiverse; from low-income households, homeless, leaving care of the child welfare system; living with a disability, early leavers of school, low levels of literacy and numeracy; and/or a recent immigrant. The combination of these factors has led to nearly half of the youth in the Work and Education program considering suicide within the month before accessing service.

We know that for these youth, traditional systems of support are not enough, and often lead to greater experiences of failure and rejection. This is reinforced by data from youth stating that if it were not for Foundry, they would have gone nowhere else. However, Foundry's use of an evidence-based, community and youth driven supported employment and education program is creating new opportunities for youth to access the help they need. We have received reports from both youth and Foundry Work and Education staff across the province that our innovative service is filling gaps and creating real impact. Using a comprehensive research and evaluation strategy, we have been able to understand and quantify these impacts for participants across the province. Of the youth who have completed the Work and Education program, not only have we seen unparalleled success with employment and education outcomes, but we have also measured significant improvements in mental health and general health outcomes.

Beyond these significant and life changing results for youth, the Work and Education program is also changing communities. This was exemplified in North Vancouver, where an employer partnership built through the Work and Education program resulted in a municipal award recognizing a local business as the “most youth friendly biz” in the city. With hundreds of social service, employer, educational, and training partners across the province, the Work and Education program is redefining what it means to create inclusive opportunities for youth in BC.

As Foundry continues to create a one door experience for youth, the Work and Education program is working hard to create a one door for all experience by addressing the employment and educational inadequacies and injustices experienced by BC's most vulnerable youth. Through this work, Foundry aims to support more of BC's diverse youth in urban, rural, and remote communities. It will be through youths' access to the integrated health and social services provided by the Work and Education program that youth will receive the supports they need to break away from the cycles that continue to promote poverty and states of ill-health.



## Key Highlights and Accomplishments

Building on the momentum established in year one, the Work and Education program achieved significant outcomes in 2022-2023. These accomplishments spanned the spectrum of service implementation and delivery to high quality data collection through our research and evaluation strategies. The following is a list of key outcomes and recognitions:

- 828 youth engaged and supported in 2022-2023, with over 100 youth consenting to participate in the program's research study.
- Over 70% of youth who have completed the program have gained employment or returned to school.
- Over 400,000 views in a co-created digital campaign for the Work and Education program.
- Completion of an in-depth analysis of a youth's journey to accessing, engaging, and completing a supported work and education program.
- Over 350 new health, community, and employer partnerships developed across the province.
- Implementation of an integrated data strategy to measure and understand youth health, employment, education, and training needs and outcomes across the province in a way that has not been accomplished before.
- Nomination for a Premier's Award under the category of Evidence and Research.
- International recognition of the innovative work of the Foundry Work and Education program through 3 presentations at the International Association for Youth Mental Health 2022 Conference in Copenhagen.
- Continued international partnership with headspace, a co-leader, researcher, and collaborator with Foundry on the development of best practices and implementation of youth IPS services.
- Innovative work and strategy development for supporting the employment and education of youth living in rural and remote communities in British Columbia.
- Successful hosting of a province-wide professional development and education day for program staff.

*Bringing health and social services together is what we do.  
Foundry Work and Education is critical to us getting there.*

## Youth Employment and Education Needs in British Columbia

### Current service needs

In the province of British Columbia

With nearly 14% of youth in British Columbia not in employment, education, or training, a significant need continues to exist for specialized youth supported employment and education services. Despite general improvements in unemployment rates, youth aged 15-24 still experience unemployment at twice the provincial average. For youth who face exclusion and discrimination based on their race, gender identity, sexual orientation, neurodiversity, and health and/ or substance use concerns, gaining employment or education opportunities is an even greater challenge. Once





employed or studying, these youth have struggled to maintain their employment or enrolment without support, translating to the province's most vulnerable young people remaining at a much higher risk of low-wages, sustained poverty, and social exclusion in the future.

### In Foundry centres

On average, 15% of youth entering Foundry centres are not in any form of education, employment, or training. When looked at independently, approximately 31% of Foundry youth report not being in school, and 61% report not having a job. Of youth enrolled in school, 48% have considered dropping out. Of the youth with jobs, 28% reported having difficulty maintaining employment. This was significantly higher at 56% for youth who enrolled in the Work and Education program. Further, 65% of young people accessing Foundry, and 70% of young people entering the Work and Education program spend 10 hours or less engaged in meaningful activities.

We know that the current resources across the province are not meeting the needs of these youth, as they require supports that combine employment and education with the other health and social services. The Foundry Work and Education program is addressing this service gap by helping youth to identify and work towards meaningful employment and education opportunities through an evidence-based Individualized Placement Support (IPS) model. This model is unique to the Foundry Work and Education program in BC and holds value in its individualized and integrated approach to supporting individuals with complex health needs to gaining competitive employment, education, or training positions.

## How Foundry's Work and Education program is building a better evidence-based supported employment and education service for youth

**As part of our strategy to create the best evidence-based supported employment program, we engaged with youth to hold an in-depth conversation about their needs.**

By hosting several focus groups with youth around the province we were able to create a journey map for youth in the Work and Education program, helping us to identify key transitions, challenges, and needed supports for each phase of our service. Some of the key learnings included:

- Prior to the program, youth felt overwhelmed, anxious, hopeless about their future and ability to find the support they needed.
- These feelings persisted into the enrolment phase; however, youth would experience curiosity and optimism if the program was easy to access, and provided a judgment-free, individualized, and strengths-focused approach.
- Once enrolled and pursuing goals, youth experienced a complex range of emotions from excitement to doubt and fear, while also feeling pressure to succeed. Individualized, self-paced, trauma-informed, and integrated health and social supports were critical to youths' success during this period.
- Once an employment, education, or training opportunity was gained, youth felt excited, empowered, and optimistic about their future. However, worries about being abandoned, or left alone were high and highlighted the strong need for continued time-unlimited support until the youth was confident enough to continue forward on their own.



- At the end of the program, youth described needing support to build on their successes and create momentum towards empowerment. After this had been accomplished, youth were able to transition away from the formal program supports.

Foundry's use of the IPS model as a base for the Work and Education program has supported teams to meet youth where they are at and provide wrap around supports to meet the individual health and social service needs that exist for participants.

### Support for Indigenous and rural and remote youth

The Work and Education program is in the process of completing a similar engagement and discovery processes with youth who identify as indigenous, and youth living in rural and remote communities across British Columbia.

## Foundry Work and Education Program Data

In the 2022 – 2023 year, the work and education program implemented a significant and rich data strategy to meet the needs of this project and provide a provincial perspective on the employment, education, and training support needs of youth in British Columbia.

This data strategy includes service and health information collected using our data platform (referred to as Toolbox) and was designed to help us answer much more specific questions about youth needs and outcomes across our province. This strategy was launched at the beginning of April 2022 and is currently collecting data.

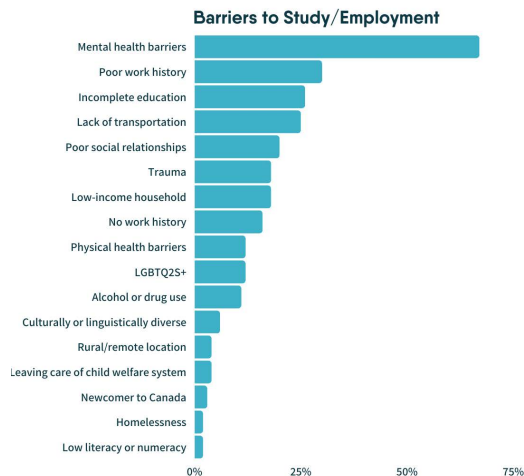
### **The youth who are engaged in the program, and the challenges they are facing to employment, education, and training.**

Based on our data set, youth accessing the Foundry Work and Education program are experiencing 3 or more complex barriers on average to employment and education.

Examples include:

- Youth who are in poverty
- Youth without housing
- Youth who are experiencing violence and abuse
- Youth with significant trauma, mental health challenges, and using substances
- Youth who are early leavers of education
- Youth who are socially disconnected
- Youth identifying as having disabilities
- Diverse youth who are experiencing racism and various other forms of discrimination based on gender identity, sexual orientation, and culture.





The highest-ranking barriers indicated by program staff included: mental health (67%), poor work history (30%), incomplete education (26%), transportation (25%), poor social relationships (20%), and a history of trauma (18%).

**Youth entering the program are experiencing complex and significant emotional and mental health challenges.**

In the past month:

- 84% of participants reported significant feelings of depression and hopelessness
- 90% reported significant feelings of anxiety
- 42% had considered ending their life
- 74% reported considerable difficulty concentrating at school or work
- 40% had used alcohol or other drugs weekly or more often
- 50% experienced significant psychological, behavioural, or personal challenges they wanted treatment for
- 87% were worried about their health
- 80% reported that their mental health was a barrier to their work and education goals
- **45% stating that they would not have gone somewhere else for support**

Except for reporting nowhere else to go for help, and worries about health, on average these scores were 5 – 10% higher than the same scores for Foundry youth on a whole.

Demographic data is showing that of youth accessing the Foundry Work and Education program

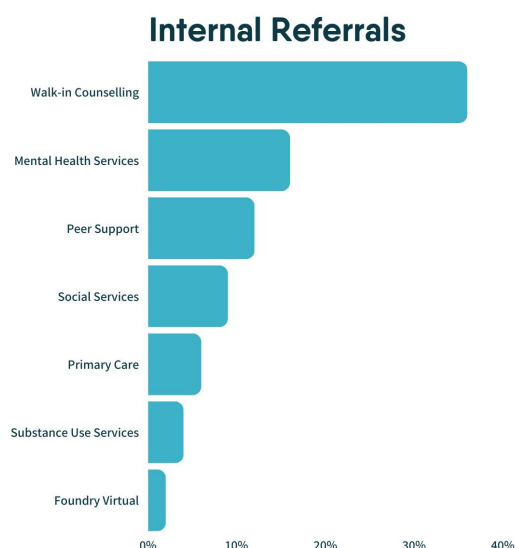


## Referrals to the program

Approximately 56% of young people accessing the program are being referred from other Foundry services. Data shows that many of these referrals are from walk-in counselling and mental health services.

Whereas, 15% of youth accessing the program are connecting with Foundry for the first time through the Foundry Work and Education program. Teams have identified that youth with complex needs sometimes feel more comfortable asking for support with education and employment goals, instead of other mental health or substance use services. Over time, these youth later connect with additional Foundry services. The Foundry Work and Education program is therefore acting as a low barrier entry point for more complete health services. Without employment and education supports being provided in an integrated health service, these youth would not have accessed the help that they need.

There have been 155 internal Foundry referrals recorded in Toolbox. On average, youth who are accessing Foundry Work and Education are accessing 2 or more other Foundry supports, such as:



- Walk-in counselling
- Mental Health and Substance Use Supports
- Peer Support
- Social Services and,
- Physical and Sexual Health

Additionally, 109 external referrals have been recorded in Toolbox. Some examples of external referrals include:

- Educational institutes and employers
- Primary care providers
- Childcare services
- Community Living BC
- Housing services
- Substance use services
- Credit counselling
- 2SLGBTQ+ resources
- Work BC
- Trauma, crisis, and emotion focused supports

**I 100% would recommend the work and education program to friends and family if someone I knew was looking for school or employment. – Foundry Work & Education youth**

The above data supports the importance and unique value of providing a supported employment and education program as a core service within Foundry's Integrated Youth Service model. It is this integration that supports the full and coordinated approach that youth experiencing complex and numerous barriers to employment and education require.





# Services and interventions being provided through Foundry Work and Education

In the past year, Foundry Work and Education Teams have completed over 4,600 visits with youth in the program. The most common supports provided include:

1. Employment Supports (2099 service events)
2. Life and Community Skills (1057 service events)
3. Education Supports (884 service events)

The specific focus of each service event depends on the unique and individual needs a youth may have. The following are common themes with examples of the types of intervention provided to youth.

## Work Skills

Focused work on job search techniques, resume writing skills, interviewing skills, disclosure skills, and communication skills related to networking and interacting with potential employers. Youth with disabilities were taught how to ask employers about rights and accommodation at the workplace and how to advocate for their needs. In addition, youth have learned about labour market needs/gaps, career profiles, and methods to search for relevant courses and programs that will increase their chances of securing jobs.

## School/Education Skills

Focused work on study skills and techniques, time management, prioritization, organization, accessing academic resources/support, and connecting with student services. Youth have learned how to connect with disability/accessibility supports at university. In addition, youth have learned how to complete school applications, apply for scholarships, and engage in career/school planning.

## Personal Skills

Youth have received coaching on how to identify personal and professional skills that will help them determine the types of employment and educational opportunities they might be interested in. Other skills include personal and sleep hygiene to help youth stay healthy and be able to apply for jobs or attend school.

## Mental Health Skills

In partnership with the integrated teams, Foundry Work and Education clinicians have reviewed coping skills with youth, using self-regulation skills to lower intensity of emotions before working on tasks that create anxiety, behavioural activation, and coping skills to support youth with mood and anxiety concerns. Youth have also received support with developing the tools and skills they need to improve self-esteem and confidence.

## Life Skills

Youth have been supported in learning how to get to work using public transit, budgeting, identifying positive social network as protective factor, maintaining housing, and utilizing harm reduction strategies. Youth have also received support with punctuality, navigating shift work and sleep schedules, credit cards, and filing taxes.



## Social Skills

With the help of the Foundry Work and Education teams, youth are building a network of support in their personal lives, communities, schools, and employment environments. Clinicians have also taught youth how to practice assertiveness skills and develop healthy boundaries within their relationships.

## Foundry Work and Education Provincial Workshops

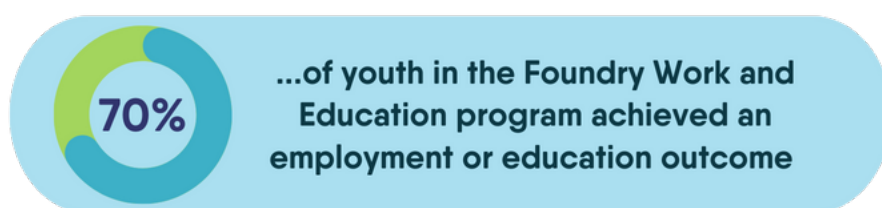
In addition to individualized supports, the Work and Education program has started to offer a series of province-wide virtual workshops and webinars. This series consists of monthly sessions, two of which were conducted in the last quarter of year 2. Topics for the series were selected based on youth interest and identified needs. Some examples include: managing low motivation, workplace disclosure and accommodation, advocacy skills, and post-secondary support. The youth attendance rate is increasing gradually. Feedback to date has been positive, with youth expressing that the workshops are beneficial.

## Post-Placement Supports

A unique feature of the Work and Education program is the continued support of youth post-placement. On average, youth required 2 months of post-placement support to maintain their employment and/ or enrolment, or to support their transition to a new, better fitting opportunity.

# The direct impact IPS and the Foundry Work and Education program is having on youth

For youth experiencing complex and numerous barriers to employment, education, and training, the Foundry Work and Education program is achieving strong and consistent outcomes. [This past year, 277 youth completed the program, with over 70% of those youth reaching a work or education outcome, compared to a 15% success rate for Foundry youth in traditional employment programs.](#)

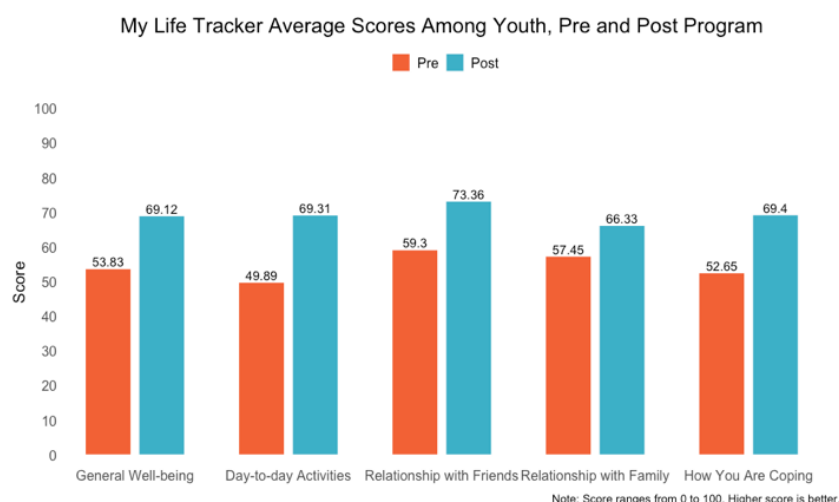
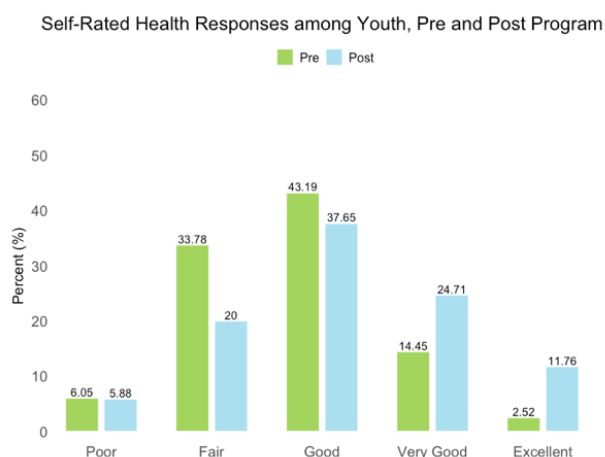
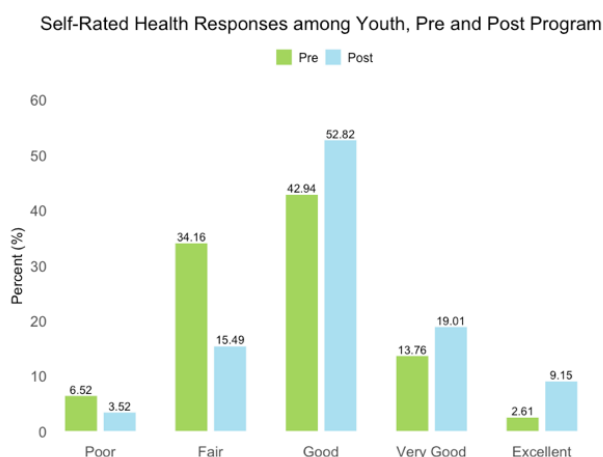


These outcomes are the result of the highly individualized, and ongoing support that is central to an IPS approach. This type of support, paired with zero exclusion criteria, is allowing young people who have failed multiple times in other programs, to experience success for the first time. The Foundry Work and Education program is thereby changing the life trajectories of youth through skill development, work and study opportunities that puts them on a path to community integration and starts to address the social determinants of health that keeps people in poverty and poor health.



## Health and Social Outcomes

The impact of the Work and Education program on participants' health and wellbeing has also been significant. At completion, 56% of youth reported an increase in their self-rated mental health, and 36% reported an increase in their overall self-rated health. Participants made great gains early on, with significant changes on Generalized Anxiety Disorder – 7 (GAD-7) and Patient Health Questionnaire – 9 (PHQ-9: assessing depression) scores between baseline and 16 weeks. Additionally, 25.7-31.4% of individuals improved their mental health from baseline to 16 weeks on MyLifeTracker (assessing quality of life), GAD-7, PHQ-9, and the Canadian Personal Recovery Outcome Measure (C-PROM) screeners.



Consistent with previous research, youth experienced a plateau between 16 and 32 weeks, suggesting a need for further support during this time. This aligns with the program's experience noting post-placement support as a unique and critical feature of IPS, supporting youth beyond entrance into the labour market, or an educational/ training program.

Participants also demonstrated a reduction in severity of depression and anxiety between baseline and 16 weeks. A change from 18.4% to 14.3% of youth falling in the severe depression category of PHQ-9, and a change from 34.2% to 11.4% of youth falling in the severe anxiety category of GAD-7 between baseline to 16 weeks. When looking at individual participants' changes



over time, 25.7% and 31.4% of participants had a clinically significant improvement in their PHQ-9 and GAD-7 scores, respectively, between their baseline and 16-week scores.

The data above describes and supports the clear indicators that youth experiencing complex health and social needs require the highly integrated, specialized, personalized, and time-unlimited support of an IPS program, and when provided with this support they can achieve significant changes to their social wellbeing and health.

## The following stories are few examples of the various stories that we are hearing in communities across the province.

*John is a youth from a northern community in British Columbia. John's primary goal with the Foundry Work and Education program was to upgrade his Math 11<sup>th</sup> to be able to enroll in a college IT program. John experiences multiple barriers including severe ADHD, difficulty with cognitive processing/ skills, and past educational struggles. He attempted to complete Math 11 on three separate occasions and dropped out within 3 to 4 weeks of starting a course. The Work and Education staff coached and supported John with executive functions; targeted collaboration with instructor to aid learning and engagement; targeted one-on-one content tutoring support; and utilized accessibility accommodations (extra time on exams, extra time on assignments, quiet testing location). As a result, John has maintained course enrollment and is on track to complete the course by the end of April. He has increased class attendance and participation and feels less foggy and is experiencing clearer mental states.*



*Raj, a youth in the greater Vancouver area, stated "I lost my foundation" after going through serious mental health challenges and being unable to continue with his previous vocational plans. His goal with the Work and Education program was to establish new vocational goals and be able to support himself financially. Raj's main barriers included a diagnosis of bipolar disorder and anxiety. He also had limited social supports and lacked financial resources. The Foundry Work and Education staff supported Raj to identify what type of short-term employment would be a good fit for him. This resulted in Raj obtaining employment as a dishwasher and working towards managing his mental health symptoms at work. In addition to this, the Foundry Work and Education team also supported the Raj with career exploration and education planning. A training wage from Foundry Work & Education has enabled him to participate in an IT training program that will support his long-term career goals. He recently commented that he feels much more confident, has significantly improved mental health, and is making progress towards a career he is happy with.*



The following letter was received from Tonya, a youth in the lower mainland who arrived in Canada after fleeing the Ukraine war.

*Hello,*

*I would like to say thank you! Foundry is the place where I received support and huge help. It's difficult to describe how grateful I am for that.*

*I came to Canada from the Ukraine two months ago. I was in Luiv when the war started. My "path" to the peaceful life in Canada was long and not easy. Even when I came, I realized how difficult it was going to be to deal with the new environment, the new culture, and new problems. I felt lost and frustrated.*

*But things changed when I came to Foundry for the first time. I received great support from a counsellor in a walk-in counselling session. She told me about the Foundry Work and Education program.*

*I am a new member [of the program], but I already feel that I am not alone. I feel like someone understands me and is ready to help with the challenges that I have faced. I am grateful for the opportunity to have counselling with the Work and Education counsellor. I also really feel better after my meetings with peer support. This program, and the centre have given me hope for the great future that I can build in Canada. I believe that the program staff will help me to cope with my traumas.*

*I am really grateful for what you do for youth, and for me.*

*Best wishes, Youth Participant.*

**"Thanks for everything you do at Foundry Work & Education, we really appreciate it." – Caregiver of Work & Education youth.**

## **Community Partnerships and Impact on Employers**

Across the province, Foundry Work and Education teams have connected with over 350 local employers, educational institutes, and training programs in partnership to support the individual needs of youth in the program. In addition to supporting labour needs, employers have received resources and education relating to the benefits of inclusive employment and how to create safer environments for diverse youth living with disabilities, mental health challenges, and/or substance use.

Through this work, our teams have been working to dismantle stigma and develop awareness in their communities. The impact of this work is significant, building stronger communities and generating more inclusive opportunities for youth.







As the winner of North Vancouver’s “Best Youth Friendly Biz” Award, the Phoenix Books and Foundry North Shore partnership is a prime example of how impactful employer partnerships can be in supporting the wellbeing of young people.

*The original Phoenix Books, Gifts & Treasures store is located in Snug Cove on Bowen Island. Jared and Quinn, the owners for the last 6 years, collaborated with Foundry North Shore to open a sister store in the North Shore. When asked what interested them in the partnership, Jared mentioned that “It was an opportunity to do something different and help out in the community”. In May 2022, the store launched on the second floor of the Lonsdale Quay and is primarily staffed by youth supported by the Foundry Work & Education Program. “They’ve gone above and beyond. We’re not able to be here all the time and we’ve been able to build that trust with the young people to be responsible for the store”. This amazing partnership has led to learnings on both sides: “We’ve learned a lot in terms of how to open a store and how to work with youth*

*which has been a really nice opportunity for us. A youth that initially needed to be supervised is now doing cash outs and working independently. Another young person is now doing our social media; It’s been nice to see the gains the youth have had with us”.*

## Below is a list of the different types of partnerships developed by the Foundry centres and Foundry Virtual BC:

- Educational partnerships
- Employer partnerships
- Training and Skills partnerships
- Health and social service partnerships
- Community partners for volunteer work

### Partnership with Work BC

In the fall of 2022, representatives from the Foundry Work and Education program, Work BC, MSPDR, and the University of Saskatchewan came together as part of a research study to discuss accessible employment services for youth in BC. The purpose of this meeting was to develop a better understanding of the experiences and needs of youth as they looked for and sought support from employment programs. A central theme was envisioning a collaborative approach to supported employment and education services that placed youth at the centre. In this way, the Foundry Work and Education program could be integrated into the larger spectrum of provincial supports, complementing Work BC as a specialized service for youth who needed the integrated health and social supports unavailable at



Work BC. By working together, youth across the province would be more likely to access the right level of support, from the right team, at the right time, regardless of where or how the youth initially reached out for support. Although the relationships between Work BC and Foundry Work and Education teams currently look different across the province, there is a common movement towards the vision described above. As these partnerships continue to strengthen, fewer youth will be lost to service, and more youth will get the help they need.

## **Innovations, Successes, and Other Program Activities**

### **Coast Capital Continuing Education Awards**

Youth in the Foundry Work and Education program have access to even more support through a newly developed partnership with Coast Capital Credit Union. With a shared interest in removing barriers and improving opportunities for youth to access post-secondary education, Foundry and Coast Capital developed the Coast Capital Continuing Education Awards and Bursaries program. Through a \$116,000 gift, Foundry was able to establish three \$5,000 awards, and allocate \$78,000 for continuing education bursaries for youth in the program. The purpose of the awards and bursaries will be to support youth in financial need, who are not able to access other funding sources to support their post-secondary goals. Our ability to establish these awards and bursaries was possible because of MSDPR's investment in the Work and Education program. This exemplifies the innovative and collaborative approach that Foundry utilizes to create new opportunities and supports for youth in BC.

### **Youth and Family Engagement**

Youth and family engagement is central to the work of the Foundry Work and Education program. With the support of our team's Youth Peer Engagement Coordinator (YPEC) and Family Peer Engagement Coordinator (FPEC), we continually work to keep youth and family voices across the province at the centre of what we do.

In the past year, youth and families have been engaged in:

- Communication strategies and marketing
- Program resources and materials
- Referral pathway development
- Journey mapping to understand the support needs of youth and family members/ caregivers with goals related to work, school, or training.

Currently, our team is focused on engaging youth and families to better understand and support:

- Youth on program waitlists
- Youth living in rural and remote communities across the province, and
- Urban and rural indigenous youth



Similar to our previous engagement projects, we have taken a phased approach to each of these areas of work, utilizing focus groups and interviews to better understand the unique perspectives and nuanced needs of the youth we support, or are working towards supporting.

## Staff professional development and education

This year, the Foundry Work and Education program was able to host its first province-wide staff education day. This event was planned in response to a need identified by both program leadership and program staff to work on focused professional development and program quality improvement activities. The in-person environment allowed for real-time exchange, and facilitation of generative activities that would not be possible through virtual interactions. In addition to the professional development and educational activities completed, information relating to current knowledge and skill gaps was collected and is being used to inform the program's professional development plan for the upcoming year. Other benefits included:

- Highlighting key learnings and strategies critical to developing successful youth employment services.
- Improving cross-community relationships and collaboration.
- Capturing quality improvement and assurance activities to create a better program for youth.
- Creating shared insights on how such a program can grow and succeed within various geographical areas.

## Research Foundry Works Plus

Foundry Works Plus is the research component of the Foundry Work and Education program. Our approach to fully integrate research into the Foundry Work and Education program has helped us to better understand and respond to the needs of BC youth, creating greater impact through our services.

To date, we have screened nearly 200 youth for participation in research and recruited over 100. This increase was the result of the work completed within our Toolbox system to flag interested youth and connect them with our research team. This is separate and in addition to the LIFT research project that was funded in 4 of our communities until March 31, 2023.

### Presentations and Publications

This year, the Work and Education team completed three presentations at the International Association for Youth Mental Health conference in Copenhagen. These presentations focused on:

- Our digital media campaign and recruitment plan
- Our understanding of youth's experience in their journey towards employment, education, and training goals
- Our international partnership with headspace and the impact of incorporating an IPS program on the health outcomes of youth.

A feature article on the Work and Education program was also published in the British Columbia Medical Journal. This was the first publication of its kind in the medical journal's history. A strong indicator of the interests and relevance of integrating health and social services for youth in our province. Please see the article [here](#).



## Budget Utilization

This year, the budget was underspent in each of the reporting categories. These include labour, project, participant, and administrative cost. With MSDPR's approval, the resulting surplus is now being redirected to supporting continued Work and Education programming in 4 communities that received two years of funding through the Future Skills research grant which ended March 2023. As we move into year 3, we are anticipating that our spending will align with the projected costs of the project.

## Learnings

After two years of implementing this project, we have learned a great deal. The following are some of the highlights from our learnings.

- There is a high level of demand for youth employment, education, and training supports.
- Youth with complex health and social challenges who receive support from the Work and Education program are experiencing significantly better employment and education outcomes vs with traditional employment and education support programs.
- Youth connecting with the Foundry Work and Education program are often experiencing numerous complex psychological, emotional, health, substance use, and social barriers to employment, education, and training goals and require the support of an integrated health team.
- Nearly half of youth entering the program would not have accessed support if it were not for Foundry.
- The Work and Education program is a low barrier entry point to other critical health services for some youth.
- Significant health and mental health improvements are resulting from youths' participation in the Work and Education program.
- Other members of the integrated health teams are finding integrated employment and educational supports highly beneficial for their clients.
- Supporting some youth who are in precarious employment, education, or training situations can help to avoid failure and crisis situations from developing. Early intervention can be beneficial for these youth.
- Access to flexible funding within the program to support the financial needs and resources of youth has been beneficial so that teams can respond to needs in a timely manner.
- Youth as young as 13 years old have been interested in accessing the support of this program for school and employment goals
- Core elements of the IPS program are very beneficial, however the model needs to be adapted or flexible to better respond to the experiences, culture, and timelines of youth, and the unique resources, challenges, and context of rural communities.



## Summary

For youth experiencing complex health and social challenges, engagement in the Foundry Work and Education program is critical to their success in employment, education, and training. This is the result of the highly individualized approach paired with zero exclusion criteria, allowing young people who have failed multiple times in other programs, to experience success for the first time and change the trajectories of their lives. This knowledge is overwhelmingly supported by literature around the world, and by the evaluation and research data collected within Foundry's Work and Education program.

Through this program, Foundry has created a unique opportunity for youth to receive employment/ education supports embedded in an integrated health care model. This is an effective program for improving the health and social outcomes for youth. Health providers, senior leadership at Foundry, community partners, employers, and especially youth have highlighted the value add to the organization. With this program, we are moving towards taking important steps in improving access to employment/education/training for BC's most vulnerable youth. This is an important progression in being able to support the social determinants of health in our province, and propel individuals out of the cycles of poverty and ill-health that they are kept in.

With nearly 14% of youth in British Columbia not in employment, education, or training, the Foundry Work and Education program is fulfilling a critical service need. Though its innovation, Foundry is addressing a current national priority to incorporate employment and training into community mental health services for youth, and we predict it will have substantial impacts at the individual, familial, societal, and economic levels, thereby advancing health-related outcomes in BC and Canada.

