

FOR YOUTH INITIATIVE | Elevate Report

June 2021





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Executive Summary

Elevate and B-You Program

Elevate Youth hosted a limited series of virtual workshops and an internship program in partnership with Weston Frontlines and For Youth Initiative. The 12 week program was dedicated to youth from Weston, Mount Dennis and other priority neighbourhoods. The program also provided a 20 hour internship and case management support for interested participants. The program included 47 youth participants.

Results

Participants completed qualitative, quantitative, and arts-based evaluation measures to provide an understanding of the impact of the program. Findings included:

Areas of Strength:

- Participant perception of the workshops and internship was overall positive
- Financial literacy topics and skill building was frequently reported as a well received aspect of the program and 90% participants reported Very Strong or Strong financial literacy skills after completing the program
- Mental health topics were also frequently reported as a well received aspect of the program.
- Participants spoke highly of the workshop facilitators and guests, internship mentors, and other participants.

Conclusion

Overall, the program was an overwhelming success in regards to outcomes and participant perception of the program.

Next Steps

The results of the program will be shared widely with the community and relevant stakeholders to facilitate sharing new knowledge. Learnings will be applied to future programming.

Funding for the program provided by the United Way Emergency Community Support Fund.





Introduction

Program Description

Between January 19th and March 31 Elevate Youth hosted a limited series of virtual workshops and an internship program in partnership with Weston Frontlines and For Youth Initiative. The 12 week program was dedicated to youth from Weston, Mount Dennis and other priority neighbourhoods.

16 virtual workshops were held over 12 weeks focused on career development and financial literacy. Each workshop was facilitated by Elevate and featured expert guest speakers and tailored content for participants. The workshops included interactive activities in small groups. 8 workshops specifically pertained to financial literacy.

Following the workshop series, 21 participants were confirmed to participate in a 20 hour internship opportunity to gain real world skills, knowledge and experiences they can utilize throughout their employment and life journeys. Participants were able to choose internships in Health and Sciences, Culinary/Hospitality, Fashion and Beauty, Entrepreneurship, Social Services, Business Administration, Acting, Visual Arts, and Coaching.

In addition, interested youth received case management support with their employment goals. Program staff completed 14 phone check-ins with youth participants to support them during their internships. 4 youth who received case management support met their employment goals and became employed.

Staff and Volunteers

The program employed 4 staff and 7 volunteers.

Participants

47 youth participants registered for the program. Of those participants:

- 46 identified as Black
- 1 identified as East Asian (born in the Carribean)
- 24 were in high school
- 2 were in college
- 11 were in university
- 9 were not in school



Evaluation Design

The program used a mixed-methods design including both qualitative and quantitative data collection tools to assess outcomes. The program also used arts-based methods to collect data related to youth experience and perception of the program.

Evaluation Goals

The evaluation sought to answer the following:

1. What employment related skills did youth develop?
2. What was the youth participants' experience and perception of the program?

Evaluation Tools

The evaluation used the following tools:

1. Intake Form
2. Post Survey
3. Written Testimonials
4. Vision Boards
5. Video Testimonials

Reporting

A report will be released to stakeholders including funder, youth, and the wider community online using websites and social media.

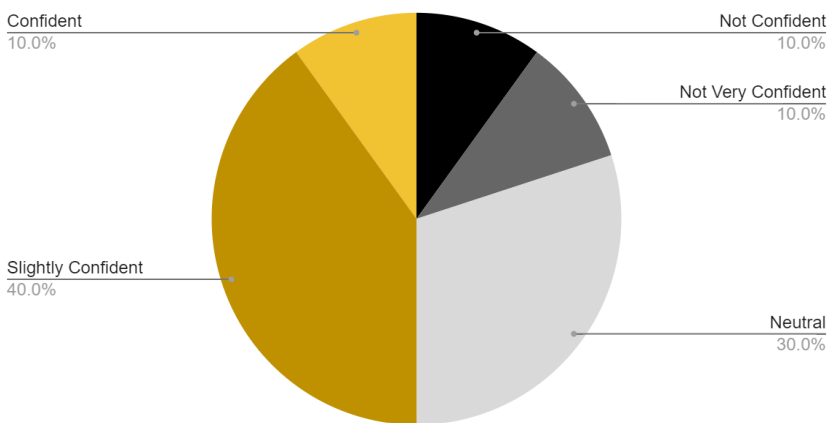


Quantitative Results

Post Survey Results

Participants answered questions related to program outcomes. 10 participants (N=10) responded to the survey.

How confident do you feel in your job search strategy after completing the program? N=10



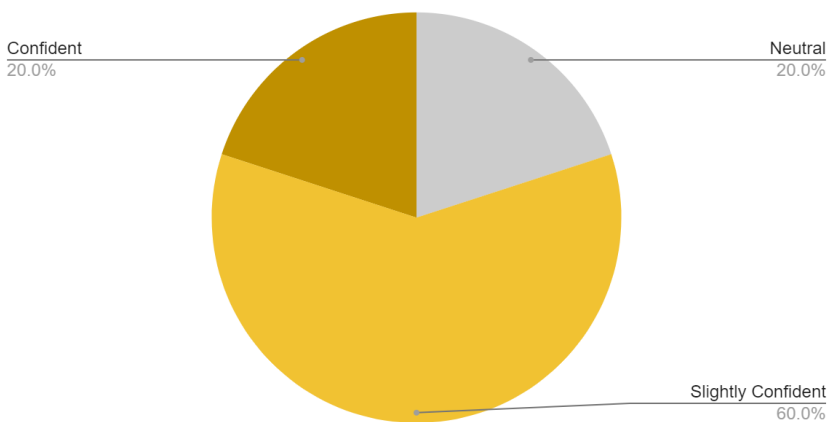
N=10

Confident/Slightly Confident = 5 (50%)

Neutral = 3 (30%)

Not Confident/Not Very Confident = 2 (20%)

How confident do you feel networking with professionals in your desired field? N=10



N=10

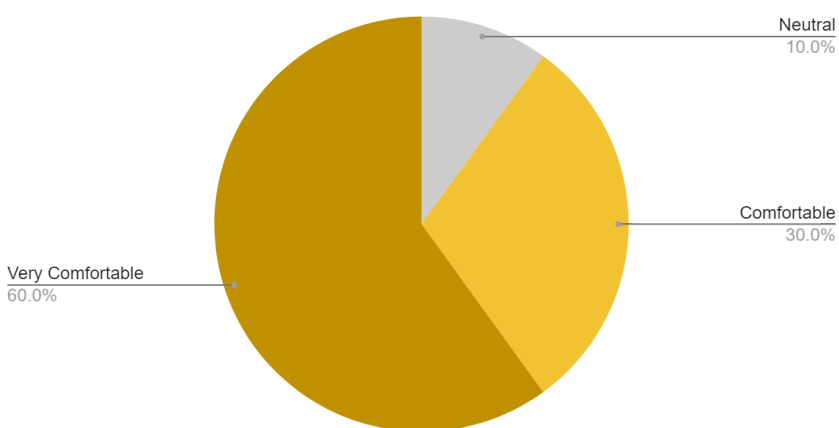
Confident/Slightly Confident = 8 (80%)

Neutral = 2 (20%)

Not Confident/Not Very Confident = 0 (0%)



How comfortable do you feel reaching out to someone in the Elevate community for support? N=10



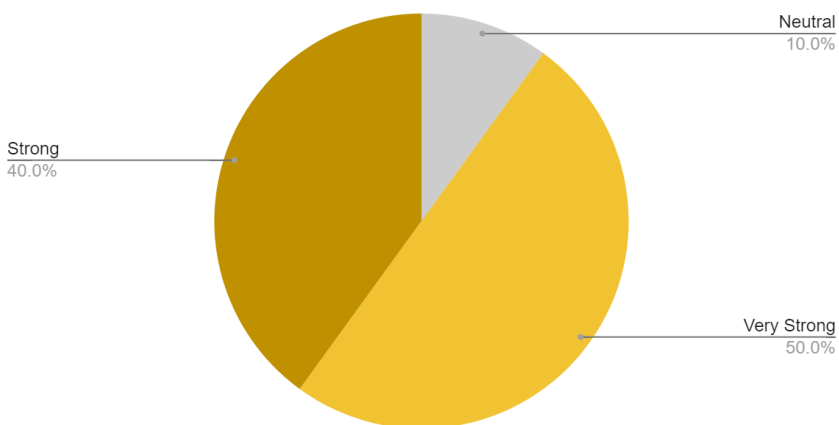
N=10

Very Comfortable/
Comfortable = 9
(90%)

Neutral = 1 (10%)

Not Comfortable/Not
Very Comfortable = 0
(0%)

How would you rate your financial literacy after completing the program? N=10



N=10

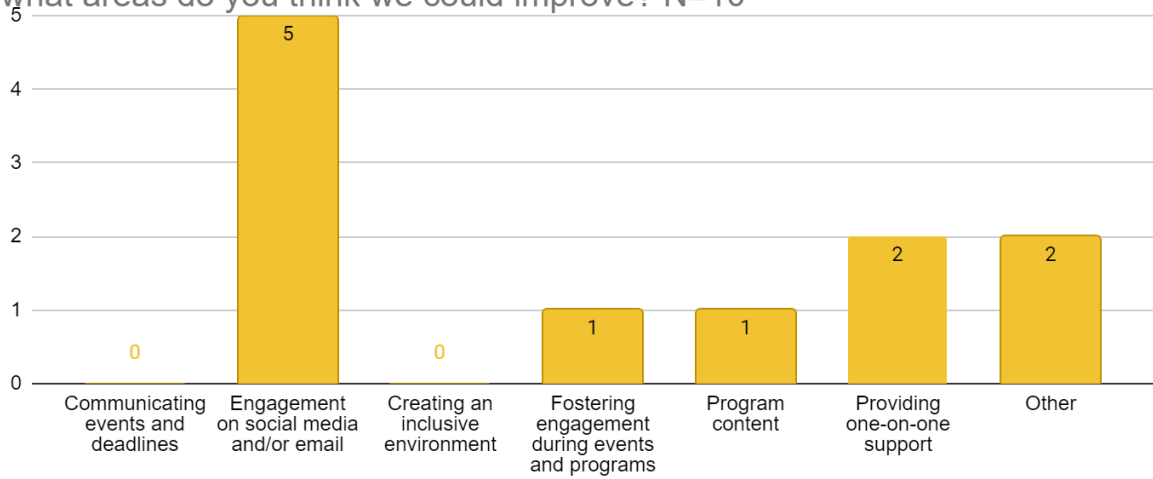
Very Strong/Strong =
9 (90%)

Neutral = 1 (10%)

Weak/Not Very
Strong = 0 (0%)



In what areas do you think we could improve? N=10



Participants were able to select more than one response for this question. Other responses included write ins:

“You guys were above, from your mentors to your meetings, everything was organized and fun.”

“it would be nice if there was a bit more interaction”



Qualitative Results

All 10 participants provided responses to the short answer questions on the post survey. Some participants provided detailed responses that fit several categories for analysis so not all questions add up to 10 answers.

Has your work experience expanded since starting the program, if yes please tell us a bit about your new role?

Four participants provided answers describing changes since participating in the program. Two participants stated that they had learned more and were considering the future. Two participants described specific career paths and employment:

“I began to work for a family friend. I currently do simple carpentry task and CNC operation.”

“For my careers I always wanted engineering but now I feel that business could help even more”

Four participants said there has been no change, 1 stated that they are not currently employed, and 1 youth did not provide an answer.

How do you want Elevate to further support you beyond the program?

Four participants said that they would like continued support with employment including: resume building; interview skills; internships; volunteer opportunities; and job searches. Three participants said that they would like to continue being involved in similar programs. One participant each said they would like additional financial support and provide access to recordings of the workshops.

“Continue to bring these opportunities to people in our community, give them something to do so we can be safe and be educated.”

“It would be cool if any upcoming programs begin that I would be informed. I feel like it will help me get a real sense of community.”



What was your favourite workshop, please explain why?

Five participants said their favourite workshops were the financial literacy related workshops. Participants stated that they learned new information that had not previously been available to them.

“My favourite workshops were the mental health workshops and the financial workshops, these were very convenient to us young black youths, these things aren’t taught at home. The workshops also shedded light on a lot of issues that many of us experience, you made us feel like we weren’t alone.”

Three participants said their favourite was the mental health related workshops. Participants stated that these workshops were relatable to their own personal experiences.

“My favourite workshop is definitely the last one regarding stress and the many different coping mechanisms out there. It really sticks with me because as someone who is an introvert and an overthinker, it tends to be consuming and had to become more outgoing and willing to stay motivated. During this workshop I learned so ways to deal with stress and found that until I can be stress free (in terms of the bad ones) I have to keep trying new things.”

One participant each stated that they enjoyed the LinkedIn workshop, the workshop facilitated by Tomiwa, and the workshop that featured airport workers.

Where do you stand on the three goals you set for yourself at the start of the program?

Three participants provided a general update on gaining new knowledge and experience. Two participants provided an update on all three of their goals.

*“1) I gained knowledge, I learned so much about myself and the world.
2) I networked, I got to ask a lot of questions and added the workshop people as networks
3) I met more inspiring black people.”*

“1. I've learned a lot about career paths. 2. I figured out what I will be doing after highschool. 3. I got a job.”

Three participants said they were “in the middle” or “in between” achieving their goals. One participant said they achieved all of their goals. One participant stated that they wanted to get a job “in cooking”.



What was your favourite part of the program?

Three participants spoke about hearing stories and relating to the facilitators/mentors. Two participants stated that the opportunity to stay after the program and ask facilitators questions was their favourite part of the workshop.

"I liked learning about money and listening to all of the guest speakers experience with being a black person."

Two participants stated that the icebreakers or warmup activities were their favourite. One participant each said budgeting and the gift cards. One participant declined to provide an answer.

What part of the program could be improved for next time?

Two participants said the length of the program could be improved with 1 participant specifying that it could be longer. One participant said they needed a break during the program. One participant said "my social skills" and one participant said "Answering emails". One participant spoke directly about the program's significance to Black youth:

"I know it might be difficult but more inspiring black people, specifically men for our young black youths. (that I will definitely be introducing to elevate youth)"

Two participants declined to provide an answer, 1 participant said nothing needed to be improved, and one participant provided an incomplete response that was not understandable.

What was the most important thing you learned in the program?

Seven participants said that financial literacy topics were the most important thing they learned. Three participants specified investing, 1 specified savings, and 1 specified debt.

"The most important thing I learned was about the financial stage where you really got to be careful with your money and to save! Save! Save!"

"How to be smart with money and not be in debt"

One participant said mental health strategies were the most important thing they learned, 1 spoke about taking care of themselves first, and 1 declined to provide an answer.



Is there anything else you would like to share?

Four participants left thank you messages and 2 stated that they were happy to have been a part of the program. Six participants declined to answer.

Written Testimonials

Three participants provided written testimonials. One participant provided a testimonial regarding participation in the workshops.

"Hi, my name is Meeka and I'm 24. Since January I have been privileged to be a part of the Elevate program and honestly, I was surprised at all of the things I didn't know about being a successful adult! This unique program created the safe and supportive environment I needed to ask questions about my future career paths and the program facilitators were great at explaining the difference facets of career planning to someone with little familiarity on the topic. Additionally, the group discussions probed questions that I needed the answers to but probably would have never articulated on my own and also created a sense of community in these difficult times. I always looked forward to my Tuesdays and Thursdays knowing that I would get to be surrounded by like-minded individuals who were just trying to better themselves and I always felt confident that we would actually be given the tools to do so! I would recommend this program to anyone in high school or university as I feel like I would have had a better start to my 20's with the information I acquired. That being said, this program has taught me that it's also never too late to get educated and learn how to do better for yourself. I am so grateful to have been a part of it!"

Two participants provided testimonials regarding their internship experience.

"The first part of being successful is to start doing actions, that's when I decided to join the internship with Mr Mark he taught me a lot of things and one of the things he taught when we first met was my resume and how it wasn't good enough he offered me to help me make it better with my interview skills and i've learned a lot as these skills they don't teach in school so to be able to have this skills is very nice i've had to go through questions and answer them to make my resume better, this helps me in the long run so I don't have to struggle with resumes and interviews when I move forward with my life I also learned how to make a cover letter and what employers see when you give them your resume and cover letter i've also learned that resumes and cover letter takes you to the door it gets you the interview so interview skills are really important when you want to land a job, i've learned the basics of resume, cover letter and interviews all thanks to Mr Mark who helped me learn all of this. and with this i've made new goals, my new goals is to have a job by summer so I can save some money for university and be able to invest with it another goal that I have is to help others and volunteer to help others in small things I want to spend



part of my time helping others and the other part of my time is to teach people to help others.”

“My name is Peterson McCarthy-Barry. I am a 15 year old, grade 9 student. I have participated in the Elevate B-You Internship program for the last five months. My community mentor is Patrick Jones. He is a personal trainer and a football coach. He was a very helpful mentor because he took the time to answer each of my questions in great detail and with a lot of enthusiasm. He shared many stories from his own personal and professional experiences. He broke things down into steps which I made notes of and will be able to use in the future. During our sessions, I learned how to be a more effective leader. We discussed many different coaching strategies and talked about challenges and how to respond to them. We talked a lot about the many ways that sports skills relate to other parts of life.

This opportunity has allowed me to have a new perspective on what it takes to be an excellent and respected coach. I have learned what type of coach I am currently and I have many new ideas about what type of coach I would like to work to become in the future.

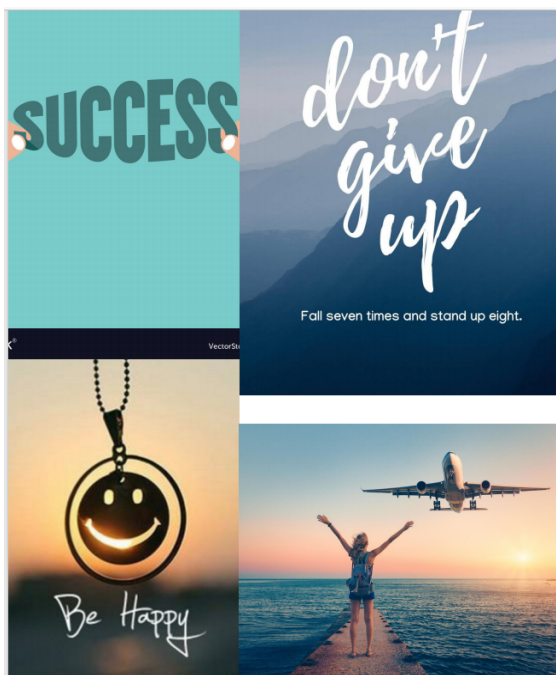
I am really looking forward to using the skills and knowledge that Patrick has shared with me in my own work as an assistant coach and recreational program volunteer. Doing this type of internship is a great opportunity for high school students who are beginning to think about and plan for their futures. I am very grateful to Patrick Jones for taking the time to teach me about so many aspects of his work.”



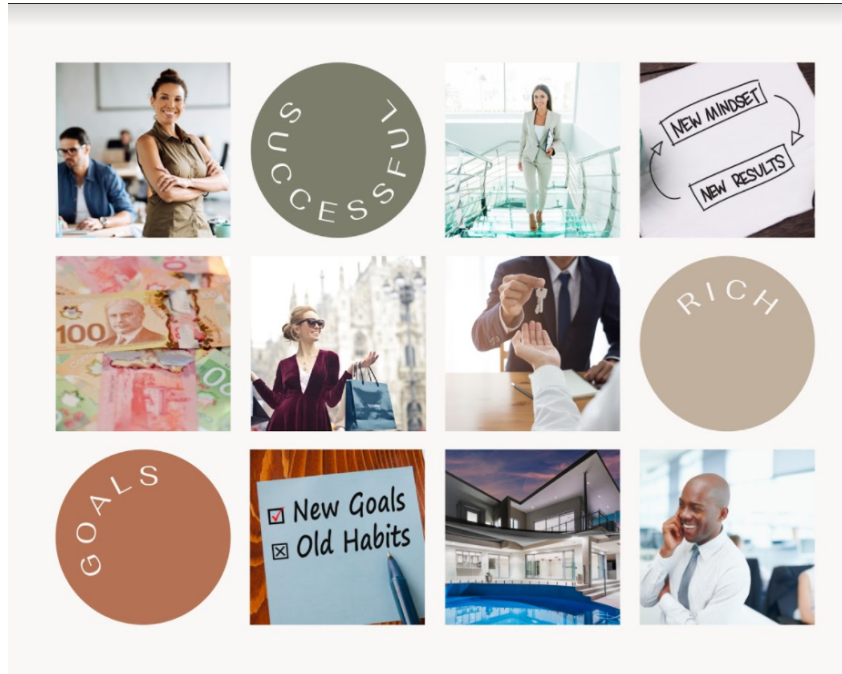
Arts-Based Evaluation

Vision Boards

Five participants created and shared Vision Boards representing their learnings and experiences in the program.



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Video Testimonials

Six youth recorded short videos describing what they learned from their internship and how they would like to move forward in their career goals. Videos will be compiled and shared on social media for stakeholders to view. Several themes emerged from the videos:

1. Practical Skills

Participants spoke about gaining practical skills from their internship experience. Specifically, the participants shared that they learned about resume building, interview skills, entrepreneurship, and marketing. Participants stated that they had not learned these skills in school so they were grateful for the opportunity to learn relevant skills in the internship.

2. Career Path Knowledge

Participants said they gained concrete knowledge about the career path they are interested in pursuing. This knowledge included greater understanding of educational requirements, licensing and costs related to licensing for professional fields, and how to pick a career path. Participants also spoke about industry specific skills.

3. Mentor Support

Participants shared that they received a high level of support from their internship mentors. Participants spoke highly about the support they received from their mentors and the knowledge they gained from 1 on 1 conversations with a person from the field they are interested in entering. Participants said they were also able to gain insight into personal connections and values related to their chosen field as well as the mental health implications for working in that specific environment.

4. Peer Support

Participants spoke about the importance of interacting with other Black youth and mentors.



Conclusion

Overall, the program was a success. All planned program activities were carried out to completion. Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive in all areas of evaluation.

Areas of Strength:

- Participant perception of the workshops and internship was overall positive
- Financial literacy topics and skill building was frequently reported as a well received aspect of the program and 90% participants reported Very Strong or Strong financial literacy skills after completing the program
- Mental health topics were also frequently reported as a well received aspect of the program.
- Participants spoke highly of the workshop facilitators and guests, internship mentors, and other participants.

Recommendations for Growth:

- The survey question with the lowest score was related to confidence in job searching strategy with 20% of survey participants reporting that they felt Not Confident or Not Very Confident. Four survey participants also requested additional support from Elevate to continue with job searches and job search related skills.
- One limitation of the evaluation was a low response rate to the survey and other evaluation tools. Increased incentives and/or encouragement to complete evaluation tools will increase the knowledge gained from the program.

Next Steps:

- Release report to the community so that new knowledge can be accessed by all relevant community members and other stakeholders
- Apply new knowledge to continually improve programming