



Yukon Employment in 2030 Action Labs: Regional Summary



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A special thank you to all of the workshop participants who contributed their lived expertise and energy to help job seekers and workers better prepare for the future labour market in Canada.

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Introduction

Employment in 2030 was an 18-month initiative that combined futures research, expert workshops, and a machine-learning algorithm to generate a forecast of skills demand and occupational growth in 2030. The project was summarized in the Brookfield Institute's Ahead by a Decade (Spring 2020). The intent of the original initiative was to fill a gap in Canada's labour market information (LMI) by providing a skills-based forecast that was responsive to changing labour market conditions across the country.

Given the Brookfield Institute's mandate to make research practical and applied, Employment in 2030 Action Labs (herein referred to as "Action Labs") was designed to build on the original initiative and to translate this labour market forecast (in addition to other sources of LMI) into tangible solutions that could help workers prepare for their future. With funding from the Future Skills Centre, this project launched in fall 2020.



Given the diversity of Canada's labour market and worker experiences across the country, this project sought to generate region-specific solutions that would ideally have replicability and scalability to other contexts. To accomplish this, we partnered with five organizations:

- + Yukon University (Whitehorse, Yukon)
- + RADIUS SFU (Vancouver, British Columbia)
- + Tech Manitoba (Winnipeg, Manitoba)
- + Observatoire compétences-emplois (Montréal, Québec)
- + Newfoundland and Labrador Workforce Innovation Centre (Corner Brook, Newfoundland and Labrador)

The following summary describes the Yukon Action Labs.

About Action Labs

Action Labs included three project phases. The first phase focused on exploring the impact COVID-19 may have on Canada's labour market, and how that may impact current projections. To do this, we conducted futures research and engaged a national panel of experts to provide feedback on emerging trends and their potential impact. This phase culminated in the release of *Yesterday's Gone: Exploring possible futures of Canada's labour market in a post-COVID world.*

The second phase entailed a series of human-centred design workshops that started by reviewing existing LMI to identify a regional challenge area. After identifying the challenge, we conducted interviews with living experts [see call out box] to gain a deeper understanding of the current experience, which led to two virtual workshops to translate the challenge into possible solutions. These challenge areas varied across regions, with the Yukon Action Labs focused on supporting youth (age 15 to 24) to future-proof their skills and enable an easier transition to the workforce, and in particular to prepare to navigate non-traditional or undefined career paths. For more details about the design of the workshops, see our workshop design [commentary](#).

What is a living expert?

Every day, each of us uses the skills and experience we possess to solve challenges. These skills and experiences are part of our “expertise” and the result of our lived experiences, education, and training. While we may each take a different approach to tackle a challenge based on our expertise, problem-solving is a shared human experience, a skill we are all required to use on a daily basis. This project invited participants to bring their expertise, as a living expert, to explore and suggest ideas that respond to the regional challenge.

The third and final phase focused on translating our process into LMI insights, which led to the generation of a series of considerations and ideas about how we might redesign LMI in the future to be more worker-centric. This information is summarized in *Ground Control to LMI: Making Labour Market Information Work for Workers.*

Selecting the Yukon Regional Challenge

We started the broad research question of “How might we identify practical solutions that help workers across Canada gain the foundational skills and abilities identified by the *Forecast of Canadian Occupational Growth* (FCOG) critical for the future of work?” We worked with Yukon University, along with a number of labour market experts, consultants, and other stakeholders in the Yukon to identify a promising focus area based on the regional labour market in the province.

During these discussions, it was noted several times by participants that labour-market data that is based off Statistics Canada data is not truly reflective of the unique Yukon labour market. Therefore, while other Action Labs regions used the FCOG and Statistics Canada data to refine the focus area, in this region we relied heavily on the expertise of partners and local data sources.

1. Yukon Work Futures, <http://yukonworkfutures.gov.yk.ca/work-in-yukon/yukon-labour-market/>



According to Yukon WorkFutures¹, the labour force in the Yukon is both active and growing. Yukon has one of the highest labour participation and employment rates in Canada. Yukon's labour demographic is fairly young and split evenly along gender lines. It's important to note that this data is heavily influenced by Whitehorse and the surrounding areas. The Yukon Bureau of Statistics' Yukon Employment Annual Review 2020² shows a 4.1 percent unemployment rate in Whitehorse but an 11.4 percent unemployment rate throughout the rest of the Yukon. In addition, there is a lower labour force participation rate throughout the rest of the Yukon at 62.5 percent compared to 72.7 percent in Whitehorse.

The FCOG identified that 35 percent of the Yukon's workers are in occupations projected to change by 2030, and young workers (age 15 to 24) are 60 percent more likely to be in occupations projected to decline more than average, making up 20 percent of all workers in occupations projected to decline. They are also less than half as likely to be in occupations projected to grow. Visible minority groups are more likely (by up to three times) to work in occupations projected to decline than those who don't identify as a visible minority.

According to a research study conducted by the Labour Market Information Council³, students realize that the world of work is changing rapidly and acknowledge that careers may not be linear. Despite recognizing the importance of skills, the students felt somewhat lost in terms of how to turn their understanding of skills into action.

Regional challenge question:
How might we help youth (from age 15 to 24) to future-proof their skills and enable an easier transition to the workforce, and in particular to prepare to navigate non-traditional or undefined career paths?



2. Yukon Bureau of Statistics, Yukon Employment Annual Review, 2020, (July 2021) <https://yukon.ca/en/yukon-employment-annual-review-2020>

3. LMIC. "In Conversation with students: What about skills?" LMI Insights Report no.26. (February 2020). <https://lmic-cimt.ca/publications-all/lmi-insights-report-no-26-in-conversation-with-students-what-about-skills/>

Understanding the Challenge

Working in collaboration with Yukon University, the Brookfield Institute facilitated a two-part workshop series with 14 participants in the Yukon on September 22 and September 29, 2021. The workshops engaged individuals with lived experience working with youth, including youth mentors, labour market experts, guidance counsellors, consultants, and employment coordinators.

Yukon already has a number of programs to support youth with career development and planning, such as:

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Yukon is the local member of the national federation, which is comprised of 108 member agencies servicing more than 1,100 communities across the country. They mobilize over 21,300 volunteers, who in turn mentor 41,700+ children and young people.

BGC Yukon is dedicated to facilitating positive developmental programming for children, youth, and families. They aim to complement territorial and community support services by providing a safe place where children and youth can experience new opportunities, build positive relationships, develop confidence, and gain skills for life.

BYTE is a “by youth, for youth” organization that focuses on empowering and promoting youth throughout the Yukon and Canada’s north. They host workshops, and offer programming such as a Leadership Fund, Leaders in Training conference, Yukon Youth Want!, BYTE Youth Job Board, and more.

Communities Building Youth Futures is committed to improving outcomes for youth who face barriers as they pursue their education and transition to employment and understands that this work requires collaborative, community-championed solutions with youth leadership and youth engagement.

Fireside Adventures creates life experiences that reinforce the importance of connecting with personal individuality: a sense of community, relevance and meaningful outdoor experiences, mixed with skill training and shared knowledge practices.

The Heart of Riverdale Community Centre offers regular arts programming for all ages, including dance, theatre, music, and visual arts, “The Heart” supports artists from beginners to professionals. They invest in employment programs that train youth in a variety of job-related skills, preparing them for a future in the local workforce.

Kwanlin Dun First Nation: Employment Services Office offers employment opportunities to all people, with preference to KDFN citizens and community members.



Skills Canada Yukon engages with Yukoners across the territory through Skills Clubs, hands-on workshops, in-school presentations and competitions (territorial and national skills competitions). In addition, they also host cardboard boat and sled races.

Skills for Success is a training initiative from the Government of Canada's Employment and Social Development Canada. They provide assessment and training tools, skills research, and access to organizations and training providers.

Skookum Jim Friendship Centre: Youth Employment Centre helps youth develop the necessary skills to successfully gain and maintain meaningful employment. They provide services to youth who are between the ages of 15 and 30 and are in transition to work.

Sport Yukon: Northern LYLES (Linking Youth To Elite Sports) Youth Sport Development Program provides opportunities for young athletes and coaches in the territory to access training from Canada's Olympic athletes and professional coaches, by bringing those experts to the Yukon to host camps.

Volunteer Benevoles Yukon matches individuals to volunteer opportunities and provides training and resources to individuals and organizations.

Youth of Today Society is a hub of youth progressive media activities designed to address arts education and youth business. The community studio offers drop-in activities, and hosts media studios for music recording, animation, and graphic design.

Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council is a non-profit society located in Whitehorse, Yukon, that supports leadership and advancement for and by Indigenous women, girls and gender diverse people in the Yukon territory and northern British Columbia. Their initiatives include the Indigenous Skills, Employment & Training (ISET) Program, We Can Cook! Project, Life Skills to Leadership Employment Training Framework, and Medicine from the Land Teaching Framework Project.



The Yukon government has several initiatives and programs:

- + Apprenticeship Training & Tradesperson Qualifications (Department of Education, Advanced Education Branch)
- + Executive Council Office Youth Directorate supports youth leadership and encourages youth engagement in social, economic and cultural activities. Provides operational and program funding for many Yukon youth organizations, other governments, and recreational societies. They have Initiatives like the Youth Investment Fund and Youth Developmental Asset Program.
- + Student Training and Employment Program (STEP) provides students with a way to earn a wage while gaining job experience in their field of study.
- + Youth Achievement Centre's day and after-school programs offers at-risk youth or youth in the justice system day programs such as education outreach, fitness and nutrition, woodworking, other life-skills programs after-school programs such as pottery, woodworking, community service work,

and recreational opportunities; prevention programs such as frustration management, alcohol and drug awareness, and self-esteem.

- + Yukon Youth Conservation Corps (Y2C2) summer employment and training program focuses on environmental education and enhancement.

Yukon University provides a wide variety of services and programs:

- + Student Success Centre's Career Planning Services offers academic advising and career planning to Yukon University students.
- + Youth Moving Mountains offers programming designed to inspire children and youth across the Yukon in the areas of STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) through creative hands-on activities. Activities such as STEM & Trades summer camps, in-class STEM training, and winter after-school clubs.
- + Yukon Women in Trades and Technology (YWITT) offers community partnerships and programs that increase awareness and provide support to women and girls in trades and technology. Initiatives include: Power Up! after-school programs, YWITT in the Classroom!, and Do It Women.



Working with Yukon University, the Brookfield Institute first interviewed four youth to understand their experiences. We shared edited summaries of these interviews, in the form of short videos, with all workshop participants in order to ground our understanding of the challenge with the perspectives of living experts. Based on the interviews, a number of key insights emerged:

- + It's valuable to learn from family members, as they act as teachers for some youth
- + In order to be successful, youth have been told to learn math, English and science
- + Mentorship and volunteer experiences are valuable
- + Youth find information through social media and emails
- + In-person workshops are a helpful and enticing learning format
- + It is important to be confident and network with different people
- + We need to de-stigmatize what "being successful" means for youth and the pressures that are pushed on them
- + There are not enough supports within the school system for all students
- + School systems need to combat colonial ways of thinking

A focus on justice, equity, diversity and inclusion (JEDI): Working closely with our partners at RADIUS SFU, we incorporated a JEDI approach to our workshop design. This included setting a series of community commitments and expectations at the beginning of the workshop to ensure that each participant understood and was committed to creating an environment of respect. This was particularly important given that our process intentionally engaged a diversity of participants, including "users" with lived experience related to the challenge area. This also resulted in an overall shift in the language we used, avoiding suggestions that the challenges these workshops sought to address would be "solved" and that a "solution" was not necessarily the workshop goal or a required contribution of participants.



Despite the success of these programs, participants felt that gaps remained in the support available for youth. To better understand these gaps, participants explored the challenge statement in further detail by discussing the specific experience of youth, based on their individual lived experience. The following section outlines what participants identified as being their current experience, main challenges, as well as what is currently working well.

What youth hear:

- + Go into trades if they are doing bad in school and academics if they are doing good in school
- + “What’s the point of working if I can’t pay my bills?”
- + “They won’t hire me there”
- + Entry-level required experience
- + “You have poor work ethic”

What youth think + feel:

- + Desire to have more choices in high school (e.g., mechanics classes)

- + Youth have to leave the territory for further education after high school
- + Post-secondary is an essential step
- + Comparing their success to their peers through social media platforms which leads to stress and anxiety
- + Lack of knowledge and information about the future and possible career paths
- + Feeling isolated, frustrated, and under-confident
- + Emotions related to trauma / history with residential schools (intergenerational trauma)
- + Worthiness— “Do I belong here (in the workplace)?”

What youth see:

- + See lots of opportunities for skills growth, jobs, volunteer, programs, etc. but not enough entry-level career opportunities in the Yukon
- + Others leaving the Yukon for education and training, and not returning
- + Rising costs of living; climate impacts
- + Experiences of gender inequity and discrimination in their career paths, schools, and training institutions
- + They don’t see themselves reflected in workforce



What youth say + do:

- + They want to “get out” of the Yukon after high school, but often return to the Yukon for education and training
- + Money and options are a problem
- + There are no places for them to work
- + “How do I get to work?”

What youth say is working well

- + Youth have a lot of different skills growth, jobs, and volunteer options for the future
- + Some high school students explore many post-secondary options
- + Yukon University is leading and providing world-class education opportunities
- + Discussion and interest in local, youth-driven activities especially land- or cultural-based
- + Individual career counselling is available
- + There are youth who are incredible emerging activists and leaders in their communities
- + On-the-job learning

What youth say is most frustrating:

- + Employers have high expectations and requirements for entry-level positions, creating further barriers for youth employment
- + Inconsistent access to trained educators in all classrooms
- + Lack of information and knowledge about existing programs
- + Lack of culturally appropriate supports
- + High cost of post-secondary education resulting in high levels of debt
- + Lack of accommodation of different learning styles (e.g., apprenticeship/on-the-land learning)
- + Not enough attention paid to accessibility, secondary supports needed (e.g., transportation)
- + Despite numerous research studies indicating challenges faced by First Nations youth, the problem has not been appropriately addressed
- + Current supports focus on young women, leaving limited support for male youth
- + Range of systemic level issues in Kindergarten through Grade 12 that prevent youth that are impacted to be successful (e.g., systemic racism, supports for learning styles)
- + Lack of support and programs for youth facing mental health and drug and alcohol consumption issues



Solution Criteria

Building on our understanding of the challenge, we asked workshop participants to develop a list of solution “must haves” to use as inspiration for identifying new ideas and solutions. Based on the discussions held in the various groups, here is the list of solution criteria.

In order to be successful, any solution must:

- + Involve youth, especially underrepresented youth, and meet youth where they are geographically, digitally, and emotionally
- + Be easy to access and provide opportunities for individualized approaches and communities
- + Include an experiential component
- + Account for various barriers and situations, and provide active supports throughout (e.g., housing, transportation, child care, elder care, cultural responsibilities, mental health, substance abuse, school drop-out concerns, systemic racism)
- + Be culturally and experientially relevant as well as trauma-sensitive
- + Ensure that the people delivering the offering are up-to-date with issues, trends and labour market information
- + Convey the breadth, variety and flexibility of work options
- + Include essential partnerships

Initial Solution Ideas

Using these criteria and their knowledge of the challenge, participants identified the following ideas as possible solutions to support youth better prepare for the future workforce:

1. Passion-based career development that connects youth with what they want to do and are passionate about
2. An accredited work placement program that is provides academic credit, payment, and employable skills-development opportunities

Other ideas discussed include:

- + A collective that brings together partners, organizations, and youth to have discussions, share information and solve problems together
- + A storytelling campaign that promotes trades and technology programs to increase the value of these options
- + A program that supports entrepreneurship, experience, and mentorship to learn other options and be exposed to potential failure



- + A program that increases the ratio of trained adults to youth in schools because learning outcomes (such as basic literacy and numeracy skills) are not being achieved
- + System change that addresses truth, reconciliation, and decolonization to change expectations
- + System changes that provide wrap-around support because it's not just about jobs and skills
- + An economic policy that prioritizes social enterprises to enable them to support community priorities, train workers, hire those who struggle with traditional jobs, etc.



Developing and Refining Solutions

To further develop these ideas, participants developed a series of prototypes. Groups explored prototyping options including app designs, websites and program outlines. Based on this exercise, participants clarified their solution, and identified possible implementation considerations. The following summarizes their comments.

Solution 1: Passion-based career development

The group working on this idea discussed the importance of connecting youth to what they want to do and are passionate about. The idea is to reshape the entry point and allow youth to explore their passions and turn them into a job opportunity. Currently, there are specific career workshops oriented to specific industries or occupations, but they don't offer a chance for students to try and explore what they like to do before thinking about potential career paths. There is a need to go back to the heart of what students want to do and find something that matches their passion and interests.

Information about workshops and other resources could be made available through a website and possibly an app. The website would provide youth with information on mentors, and job postings—a one-stop shop. Since there are already a lot of resources available, this solution would seek to bring those



resources together in one accessible online location. This solution would serve students who are not currently in the school system.

Solution 2: Work placement program

The group working on this idea recognized that there were numerous high school programs that already exist. Students who are accessing these existing supports are often the ones that are finding employment opportunities. This solution is about building opportunities for students that are not thriving or seeing themselves in that system. This accredited co-op program will provide youth with academic credit, payment, and employable skills development opportunities. Employers will get wage subsidies, access to a pool of employees, and support for training and onboarding. For implementation, the program can start with a pilot, partnering with schools and organizations doing similar work. Instead of duplicating, it's about aligning with existing initiatives.

Next Steps

Each solution would require partners and funding. The groups identified various potential partners such as schools, employment organizations, and industry partners. Yukon University expressed support in connecting organizations to facilitate continuous discussion on this challenge statement. Further funding, partnership, resources, and volunteers are required to pilot each of these ideas, as well as a landscape analysis to understand existing tools that could be repurposed to incorporate functionality needed to support youth.



About the Regional Partner

Yukon University is a flexible post-secondary institution grounded in research and education relevant to the North. Yukon University prioritizes the uniqueness of the North as a driving factor in all that it does to preserve, thrive, and grow the Yukon, together. With tailored learning opportunities and programs, the University's thirteen campuses play a critical role in delivering education throughout the Yukon. Yukon University invites students from across Canada and the world to come study with us and learn more about Canada's North.

YukonU's Innovation & Entrepreneurship Centre (I&E) supports innovators and entrepreneurs with funding, resources, expertise, and incubation. I&E serves any Yukoner with a novel idea they intend to create a business around. By providing grant money and connections to relevant experts, and/or business education and mentorship, I&E helps innovators test technical feasibility, explore market potential, and increase the likelihood of commercial success. Whether an established business owner or a first-timer with a dream, I&E supports entrepreneurs, "wantrepreneurs", and innovators at any age and in any stage in their business, from new idea to prototype, through iteration and refinement, to launch, to market, and early stages of business growth and expansion.

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