



CANADIAN COUNCIL FOR YOUTH PROSPERITY

CONSEIL CANADIEN POUR LA REUSSITE DES JEUNES

National Youth **EMPLOYMENT SECTOR** Town Halls

A State of the Sector Report

About the Canadian Council for Youth Prosperity

The Canadian Council for Youth Prosperity is a non-profit organization supporting youth workforce development in Canada. We are a cross-sector, collaborative table of highly-skilled community and corporate leaders improving the sector through engagement, coordinated activities, research and advocacy.

We thank our partners and sponsors for making the National Town Halls possible.



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FIRST WORK



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INTRODUCTION

Following a drop of over one million in March, employment fell by nearly two million in April, bringing the total employment decline since the beginning of the COVID-19 economic shutdown to over three million. – figures from Statistics Canada

COVID-19 accelerated the need for the employment sector to change the way it delivered support to youth. As system conveners and connectors within the workforce development sector, CCYP noticed that there had not been any discussion or notable investment in services to support the sector to respond to the increased need to support more vulnerable youth during the economic recovery. We and our partners deemed it imperative to open a discussion with frontline practitioners to gain insights into what they would need to be able to support youth in finding employment as we moved towards an economic recovery.

This was the impetus for the National Youth Employment Sector Town Halls.

The town halls were organized by the Canadian Council for Youth Prosperity (CCYP), in partnership with AXTRA, Opportunity for All Youth, NPower Canada, the Canadian Mentoring Partnership, YWCA Canada, OTEC, CERIC, The Counselling Foundation of Canada, The Government of Canada – Youth Employment Skills Strategy and RBC.

During the week of June 15-19, 2020, we brought employment service providers (ESP) from across Canada together to address these unprecedented times. The town halls created an opportunity for the youth employment sector to come together and talk about how they were adjusting to the impacts of COVID-19 and what they would need to support the reopening of the economy. Employment service practitioners who are on the frontline needed a forum to react, share and discuss issues (and find solutions) that they were encountering in real time.

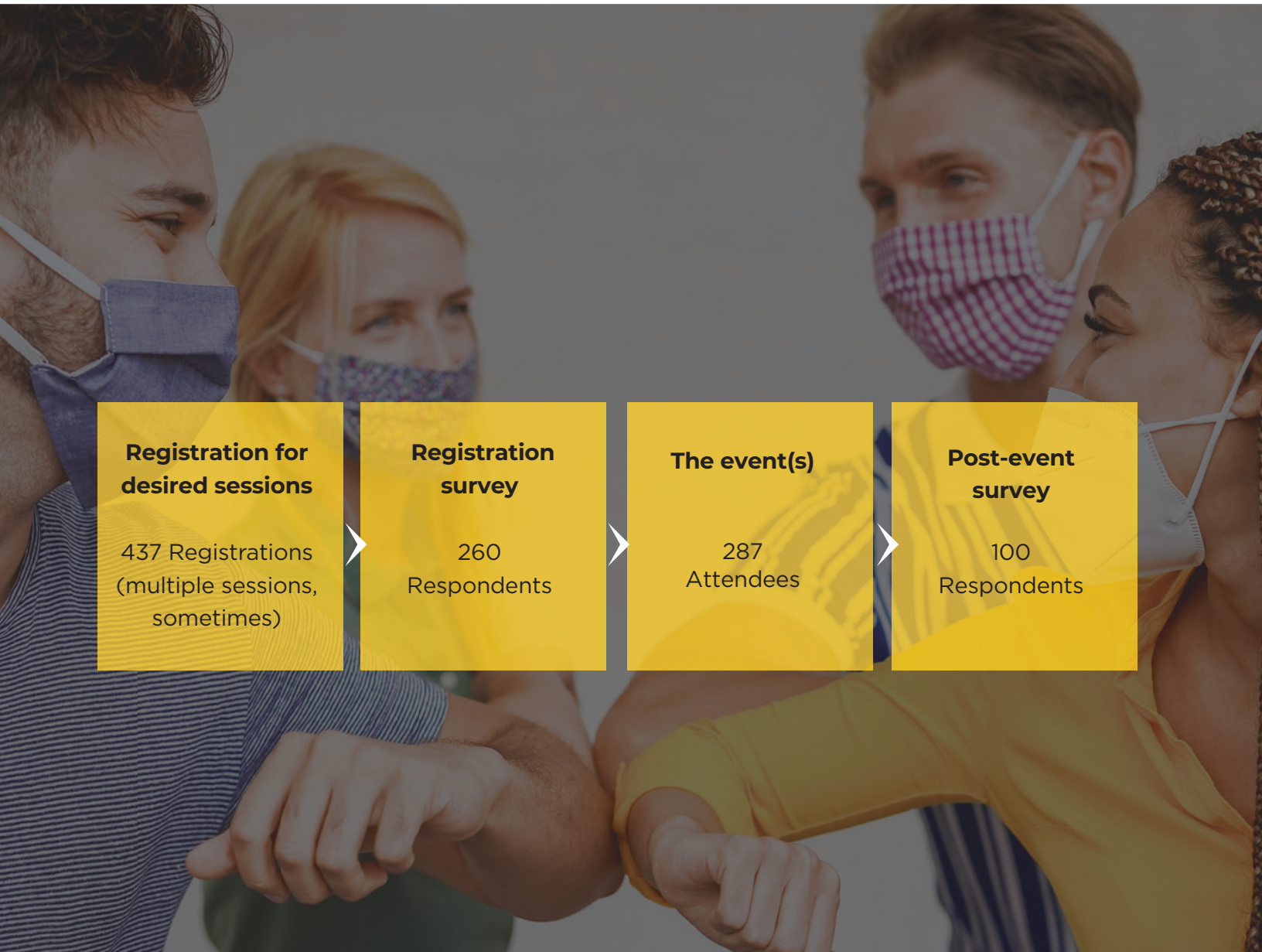
CCYP along with our partners designed an interactive session, with polling and breakout sessions, and these were bookended with a registration and a post-event survey.

In or convening of practitioners we sought to learn the following:

- 1 How can service provision change to respond to the new labour market?
How can technology help?
- 2 What data should we (ESPs, government) be collecting to better understand stakeholder needs?
- 3 What do you need as a professional to support youth?
What does the sector need?

What follows is what we learned from first-hand engagement with frontline practitioners.

The National Town Halls (NTH) covering the impacts of Covid-19 on the youth development sector consisted of three participant activities: the town halls themselves divided into regional sessions, i.e., seven of them, a registration survey and a post-event survey.



We report on the National Town Halls and accompanying surveys by analyzing the qualitative and quantitative data received from sector respondents.

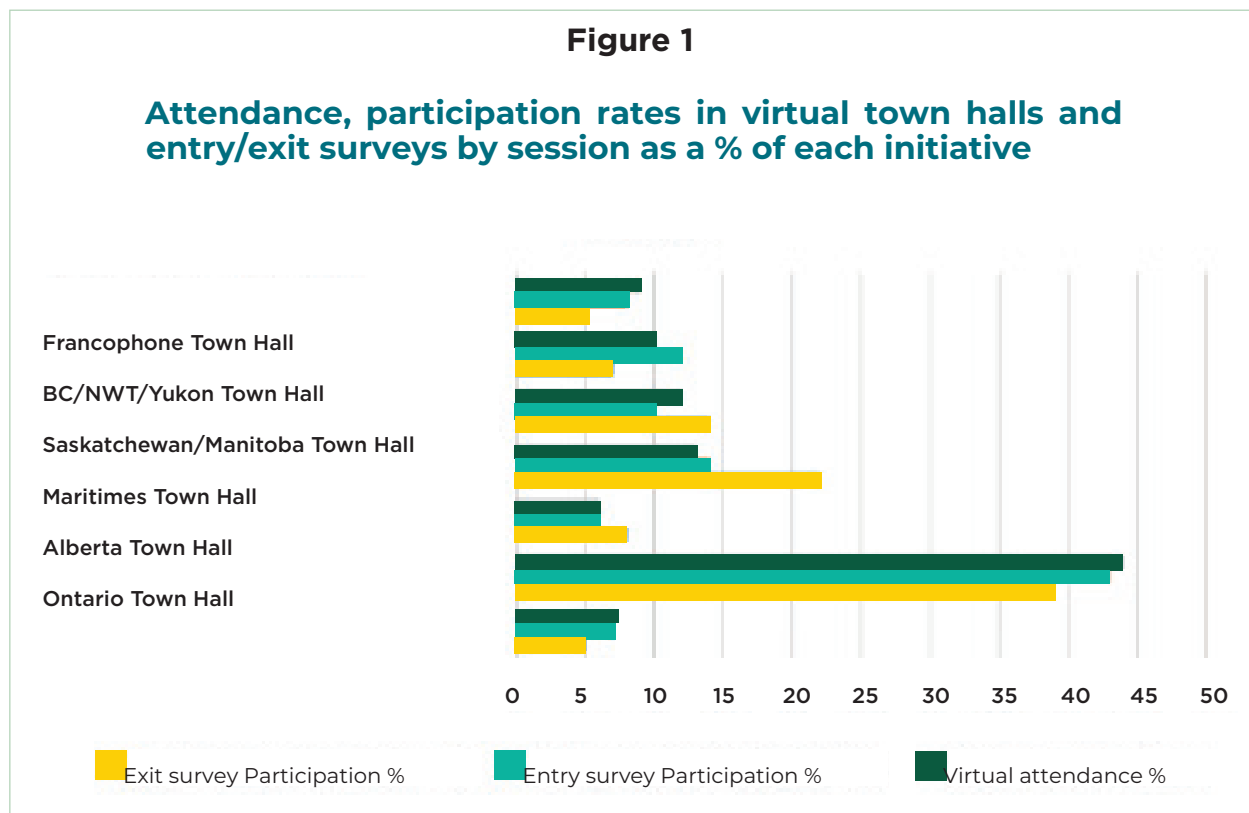
WHO ATTENDED

We had a total of 437 registrations for one or more town hall sessions by 411 individuals representing various organizations.¹ Of the 411 registrants, there were 287 registrants for one or more town hall sessions. Information gathering from the town halls culminated in a post-event survey with 100 respondents.

The NTH sessions in all enjoyed an attendance rate of 66% amongst external participants, which is anecdotally known to be close to the ‘norm’ for free events.²

Of the 287 attendees, 44% were Ontario session attendees. The rest were distributed across the remaining six sessions from Quebec, Alberta, Maritimes and Quebec (English language), Saskatchewan and Manitoba and the Francophone sessions. Consequently, the thematic discussions and participation in the National Town Halls were very much influenced by Ontario’s participation.

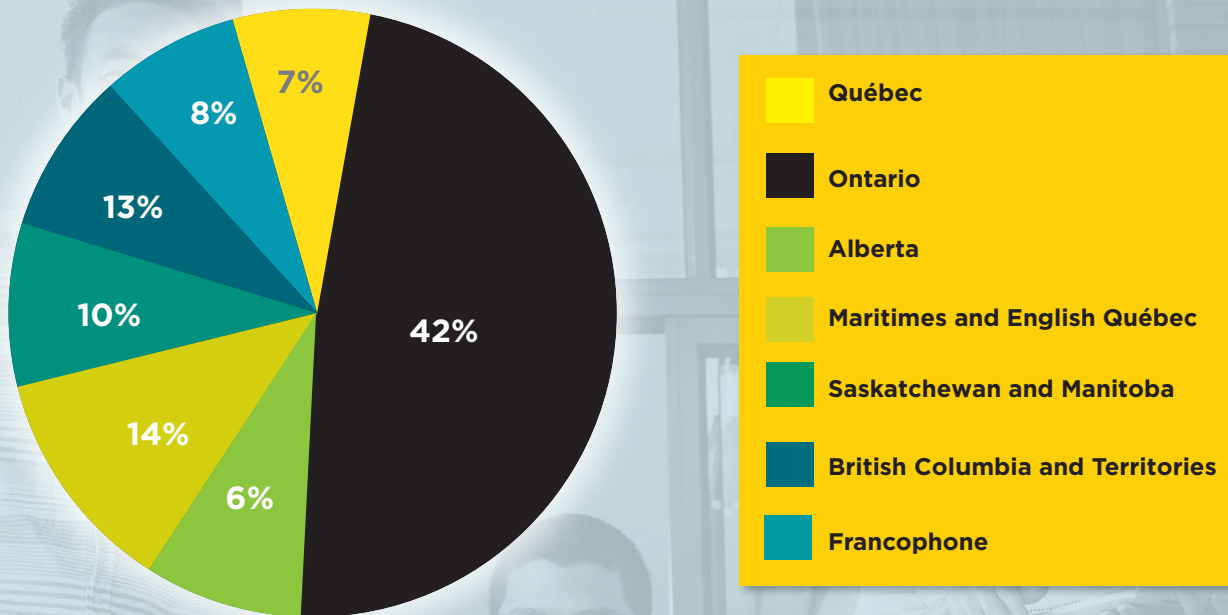
This applies to participation rates in the registration survey and post-event survey by session too. Below is Figure 1 indicating comparative attendance and participation rates in the three information gathering methods – the event, registration survey and post-event survey.



¹ See Appendix for list and organization details.

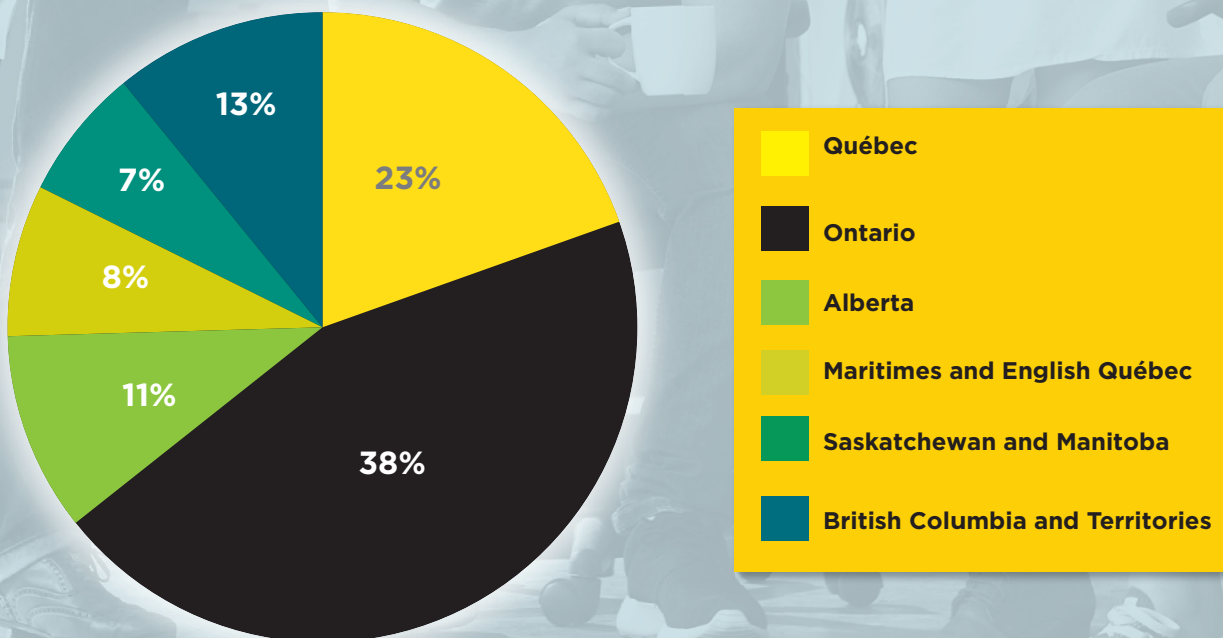
² There is some discussion of the actual extent of attrition rates at free events, depending on the demographic and type of event. It ranges between 40-50% for youth attendees and between 25-30% in general for other groups and types. However, these appear to be anecdotal statistics, rather than published statistics. See blog by event organizing company. <https://www.eventtribe.com/t/what-no-show-rate-do-you-expect-at-free-events/99>

Figure 2: Panel A
Regional Participation



Source: Compiled from registration data.

Figure 2: Panel B
Canada Population Distribution



Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census

We look for other patterns in the data with respect to ESP clientele and the ESPs themselves.

Regional patterns:

Of the 9 groups of youth clientele being served, there are distinct regional differences that arise in terms of services and supports for specific clientele groups. These are reported in Table 2 below and are self-explanatory. For example, the vast majority of practitioners from Quebec and Francophone groups (87% of them) in the survey served NEET youth; indigenous, not as much at 26%. Of course, note that these are not country wide or consistent because our sample is not a constructed statistical one.

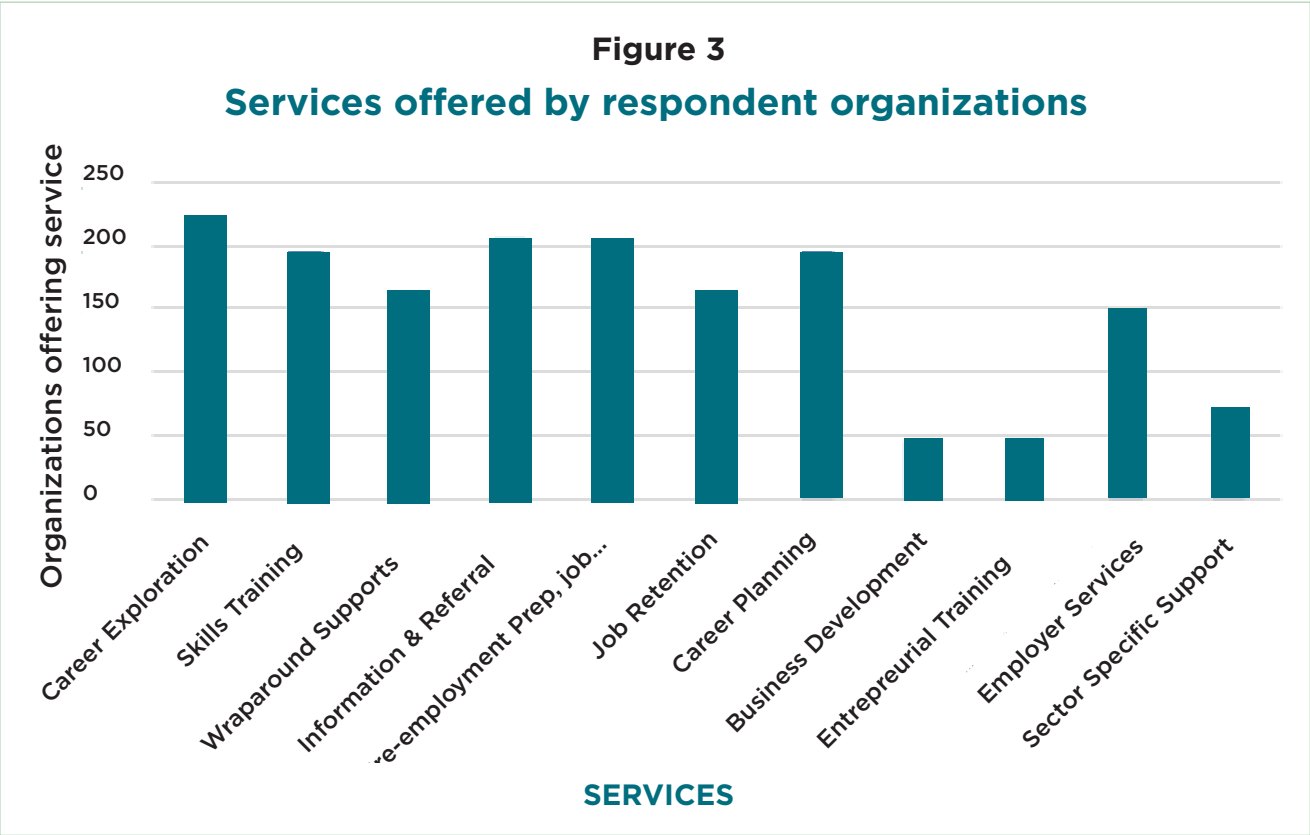
Table 2

	TOP 2 GROUPS SERVED BY ESPS		BOTTOM 2 GROUPS SERVED BY ESPS	
	% of session's respondents	% of session's respondents	% of session's respondents	% of session's respondents
QUEBEC	NEET youth, 83%	Employers & Students, 67% each	Indigenous at 17%	Youth with intellectual disabilities, 33%
ONTARIO	Youth living with mental health problems, 83%	NEET youth, 76%	Youth with physical disabilities, 67%	NEET, 67%
ALBERTA	Newcomer youth, 69%	Students 69%	Employers, 38%	LGBTQ, 38%
MARITIMES & QUEBEC (EN)	Youth living with mental health problems, 81%	Youth living with physical disabilities, 75%	NEET youth, 53%	NEET youth, 53%
SASK./ MANITOBA	Students, 84%	Indigenous, 68%	Youth with intellectual disabilities, 28%	NEET, 40%
BC/YK/NWT	Youth living with mental health problems, 72%	Students & NEET, 53%	LGBTQ, 41%	Indigenous, 41%
FRANCOPHONE	NEET youth, 90%	Youth living with mental health problems, 80%	Indigenous at 35%	LGBTQ, 50%

Source: Data compiled from 260 registered individuals prior to event

How is the clientele served?

Respondents from participating organizations typically offer a variety of different services. These are presented in Figure 3 below. The services offerings have a range of clientele, low risk clients who could avail of career exploration services and higher risk clients who benefit from wrap around services for navigating their respective and particular needs, outside of employment itself.



Source: Data compiled from registration survey respondents.

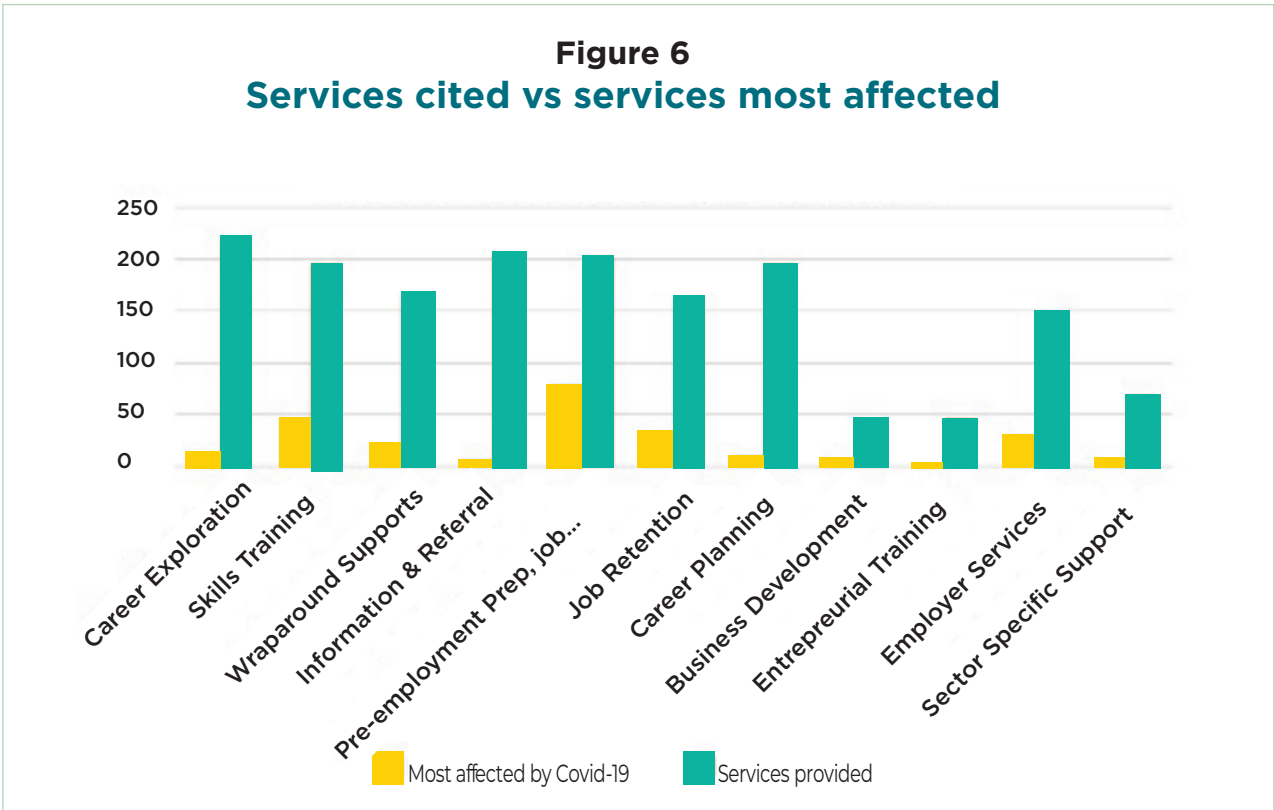
IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON EMPLOYMENT SERVICE PROVIDERS

Participants of the town halls indicated both, on the registration survey and during the in-session discussions, that they faced numerous challenges in their service offerings during the COVID shutdowns. Figure 6 presents the distribution of respondents by the range of services that have been cited as most affected by the shutdowns.

Most employment services practitioners transitioned to working from home full-time virtually, 74% of the 260 registration survey respondents. A small minority, 47 of the 260 returned to work in an in-person capacity. Five respondents were laid off and the remainder worked part time.

Organizational impact

Participants were asked which of the services they provided as an ESP (Career planning, Skills Training, etc.) were most affected by COVID-19. Further, Figure 6 illustrates the respondent’s identification of services most hit by the crisis compared to the extent of service offerings under normal circumstances.



Source: Data compiled from registration survey respondents.

The blue bar shows which services were cited as most affected, while the yellow bars show how many participants offered the service in normal times. In absolute values, **Pre-employment job preparation and placements** led on services most disrupted, followed by **Skills Training, Job Retention** and **Employer Services**. All in all, those four services emerged as the four most disrupted by COVID-19.

COVID-19 training and respondent sentiment

The survey asked participants whether the ESPs they represented were providing COVID-19 specific information and support to clients (to which 77% answered yes). They were then invited to rate their comfort levels regarding four specific support topics, with a score of 0-100:

- providing information on COVID-19 government aid like CERB,
- providing information for employer subsidies,
- providing information regarding clients' rights to work from home or stay home from work, and
- providing information regarding health and safety actions being taken by employers.

Participants identified the source from which they had received the training that enabled them to provide COVID-related information. This allowed us to run a statistical correlation model, comparing the effects of different sources of information on the comfort levels of participants in providing information for clients. Our aim was determining whether provision of information and the type of agent providing information affected the level of comfort felt by employment services respondents in working through this crisis.

*Note: All effects below are relative to “Other” sources of training, aka not being from the government, public health authorities, community organization (like the Red Cross), employers, or from their networks/associations.

CERB comfort level: The only source of training to have a statistically significant effect on this is the Government (federal, provincial or municipal). Having received training from the government increased comfort levels by approximately 46%.

Employer subsidies comfort level: Three sources had a statistically significant effect: a 37% increase from health authorities as a source, a 32% increase from government as a source, and a 34% decrease when employers were the source of training!

Right to stay home comfort: No amount of training had any statistically significant effect on this comfort level.

Health and safety comfort level: The only source of training to have a statistically significant impact here is from health authorities/public health, with an increase of approximately 38%.

Overall, there are few surprises here: Training from the government increases comfort with government programs like CERB, while training by public health authorities increases comfort with relaying information about health and safety.

The table below shows the effect of training sources on the comfort levels, with the statistically significant ones coloured yellow and orange for ease of distinction.

Table 3

	Government	Public health authorities	Network/ association employer	Community	Organizations
CERB comfort level	46%	30%	-16%	16%	11%
Employer subsidies comfort level	32%	37%	-2%	-34%	-24%
Right to stay home comfort	22%	34%	4%	-34%	-31%
Health and safety comfort level	26%	39%	-2%	5%	-18%

Source: Statistics estimated from registration survey respondents.

Overall, one could conclude that training from the government and public health authorities is the most helpful/impactful, while Network/Association employer-led training seems to be the least impactful.

APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

In-session and post-event survey analyses

The town hall sessions themselves were designed with two objectives:

- a) learning from the employment sector of very specific cases, problems and suggested solutions (policy proposals) that could ease working during the COVID crisis, and
- b) providing sector practitioners with a forum to share their sentiments, fears and opinions freely.

The actual town halls had two components; a pooled **general** session/discussion with real-time polling for each regional session, followed by concurrent (breakout) sessions to conduct in-depth discussions on issues. We used Google **Jam Boards** to facilitate breakout discussions. At the end of each session, a post-event survey was sent to participants in a follow-up email.

There were 100 respondents in all from the French and English sessions. However, 15 of them had **NOT** registered for the town halls and had joined sessions after registration had closed. They were often connected to a registered organization and were likely staff of registrants who attended or were stand-ins. As a result, once we take them into account, we ended up with 85 respondents who had initially registered, participated in both the Registration **survey** discussed in earlier sections and the post-event **survey** talked about above.

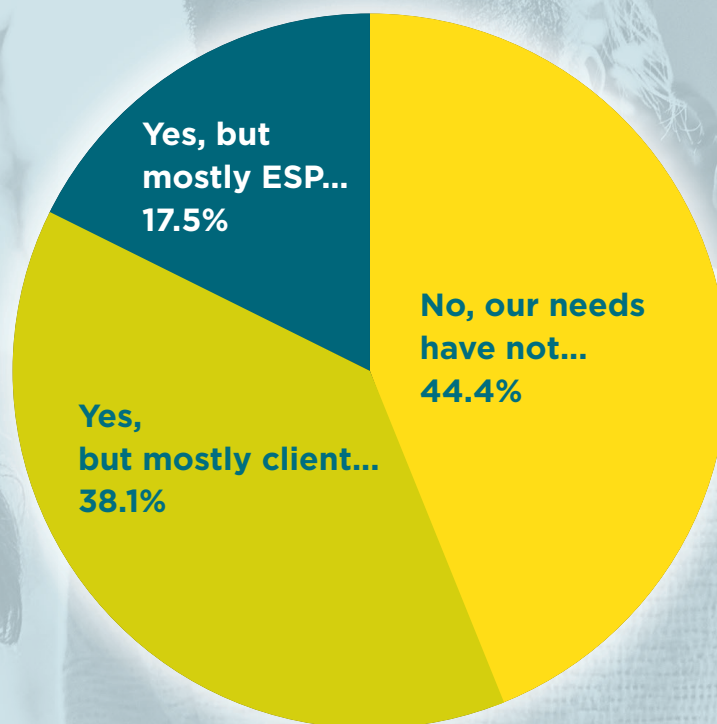
General Session Results: ESP opinions on government response to sector needs

Analyses of registration survey results indicated that access to training and the source of information for adapting services to COVID crisis conditions played an important role in affecting the level of confidence with which service delivery personnel could continue their work. That there are additional supports that ESPs require in these difficult times is apparent from their responses during the interactive components of the town hall sessions themselves.

We enumerate in this section, the qualitative issues discussed by town hall participants, in a free-flowing discussion. That government needs to address some very specific requirements of this sector is apparent from the in-session polling undertaken and discussions during the general session itself. Results from an in-session poll of respondent sentiment regarding unmet needs due to government inefficiencies are summarized by the pie chart in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4

Do you think your and your client's needs have informed government response?



Source: Event participants in general sessions.

This is a 'glass half full' or 'glass half empty' scenario. A slim majority (56%) believe that some needs have been met; either client or ESP but not both. A sizable minority, 44% say explicitly that their own needs have not been met (but someone else's has). That is the glass half full view.

Another interpretation is a general implication that 'someone other than themselves' is having their needs addressed which raises the share of respondents feeling excluded to first 82% (the yellow and mustard shares together) and then, if we assume that it is mostly non-ESP practitioners surmising that only ESP needs have been met - that makes the whole pie!

Finally, respondents expressed some dissatisfaction concerning the government response to themselves (ESPs) but less so, towards their clients.

Concurrent breakout sessions: In-depth discussions and emerging themes

The following are the two components of the analyses, the **breakouts** and the **post-event survey**. They were complementary as they allowed a comparison of the themes and challenges that were brought up by town hall participants. The findings from these two pieces will inform the analysis below.

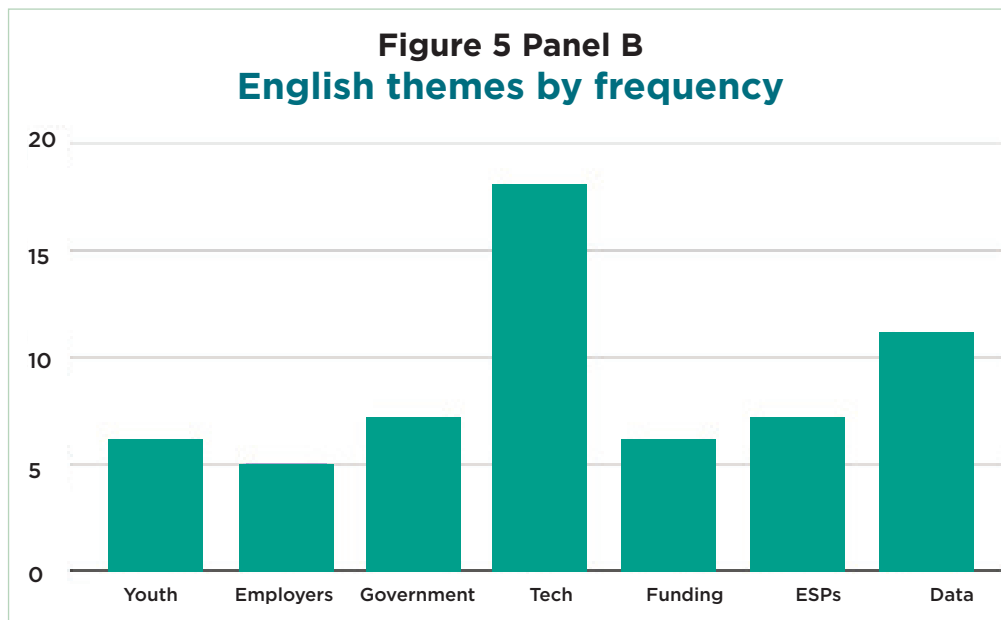
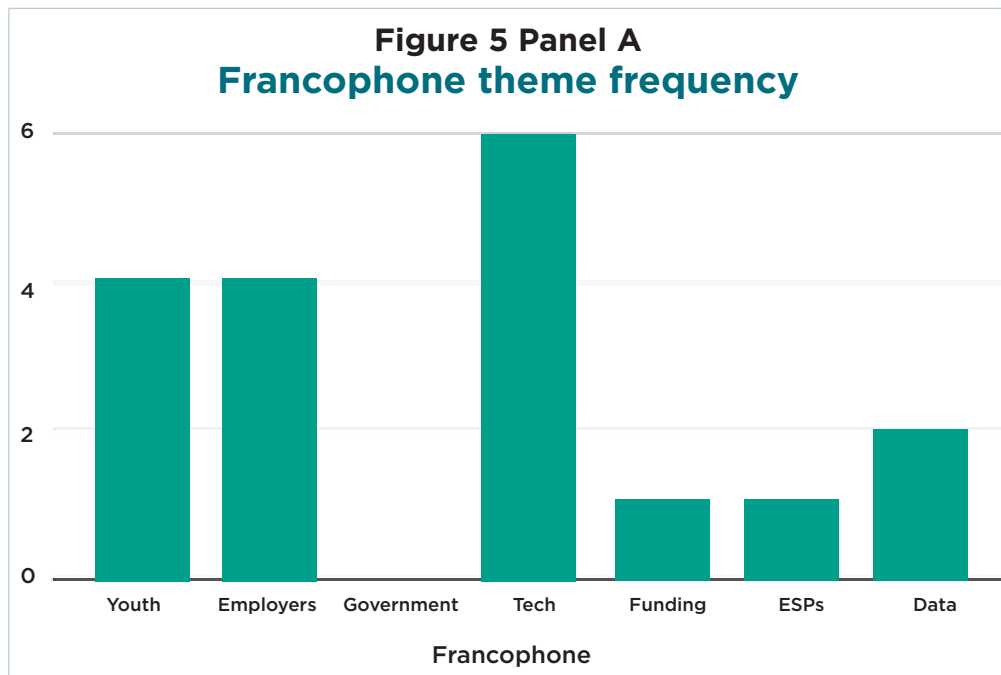
Breakouts

Each session had a number of virtual rooms that participants were distributed into, and were asked to respond to three questions. From the ensuing discussions, some themes emerged. The questions were:

- ① How can service provision change to respond to the new labour market?
How can technology help?
- ② What data should we (ESPs, government) be collecting to better understand stakeholder needs?
- ③ What do you need as a professional to support youth?
What does the sector need?

In order to synthesize essentially qualitative information from 287 town hall participants, we have compiled and catalogued common themes under single, overarching concepts present in each response set provided to each of the three questions. They are: Youth (clients), Employers, Government, Technology, Funding, ESPs, and Data. There were a total of 78 comments identified in the 26 rooms of the seven town hall sessions held. The frequency with which each theme came up during these sessions is illustrated in the graphs below.

Each bar of Figure 5, Panels A and B, both panels measure the number of times a particular theme came up in a region/session. So, in the Francophone sessions, ‘Technology’ came up six times in all, while in the English sessions it came up 18 times.



Source: Data compiled using discussion themes from event participants

Common and recurrent themes in both language sessions (the breakouts) ordered are:

- I** Concerns about technology: access to it, using it and its distribution and other qualitative effects
- II** Issues with data: Client-based data availability to better advise them.
- III** Concerns about youth and employers: Lack of motivation for the youth to return to work and problems being able to connect employers and clients.

EMERGENT THEMES

Common themes emerged from in-depth discussions from the breakout sessions, and the post-event survey administered afterwards.

Respondents of the post-event survey were asked to name their top three challenges when addressing the effects that COVID-19 had brought about. Often, they were the same challenges that they elaborated on during the discussion in the breakout sessions. We discuss the common emerging themes from the interactive session and the post-event survey below.

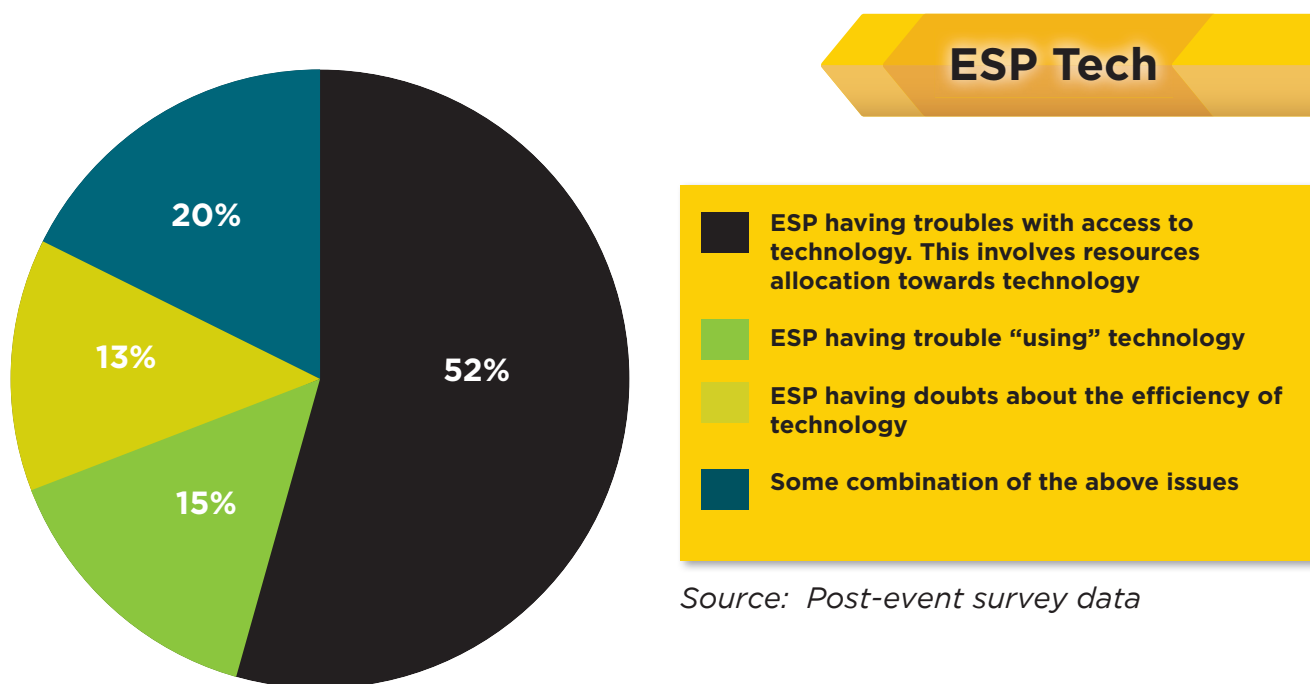
Theme 1: Technology

Concerns about it, access to it, using it, its effectiveness and other qualitative effects.

Post-event survey results

Almost all of the 85 post-event survey respondents cited technology (some aspect of it) at least once amongst the three identified challenges. Technology figured in almost 2/3 of all responses. Approximately half of them cited technology as a concern or challenge for themselves and their work; the other half cited it as a problem for their clients. The breakdown can be seen in Figures 7 Panels A and B below.

Figure 7 Panel A
Technology access, use and impact on employment services providers



Source: Post-event survey data

The pie chart above describes their concerns in order of importance. Fifty-two percent of respondents emphasized that ESP access to technology as an issue in at least one of their three identified challenges. This included issues with funding and access to proper platforms and training to carry out their service delivery virtually. Breaking down further, 13% had doubts about the efficiency of the technology they were using, 15% had issues properly using technology they were given, 20% cited both a combination of the above factors as an issue.

Breakout results

Employment service provider **access** to appropriate training and appropriate software to adequately serve clients given physical distancing measures:

- Many session participants communicated that there was a gap in the software and training they had access to. Some spoke about the need to make technology training central to their training, but they also expressed a lack of funding, support and experience in this realm. This was expressed in emphasizing the importance of the “informal training that comes from interacting digitally with clients and gauging their needs” (Quebec). This puts the emphasis on growing experience as providers use digital tools more frequently, but many did not feel supported in this new exploratory and experimental phase of service delivery in the form of funding or training.

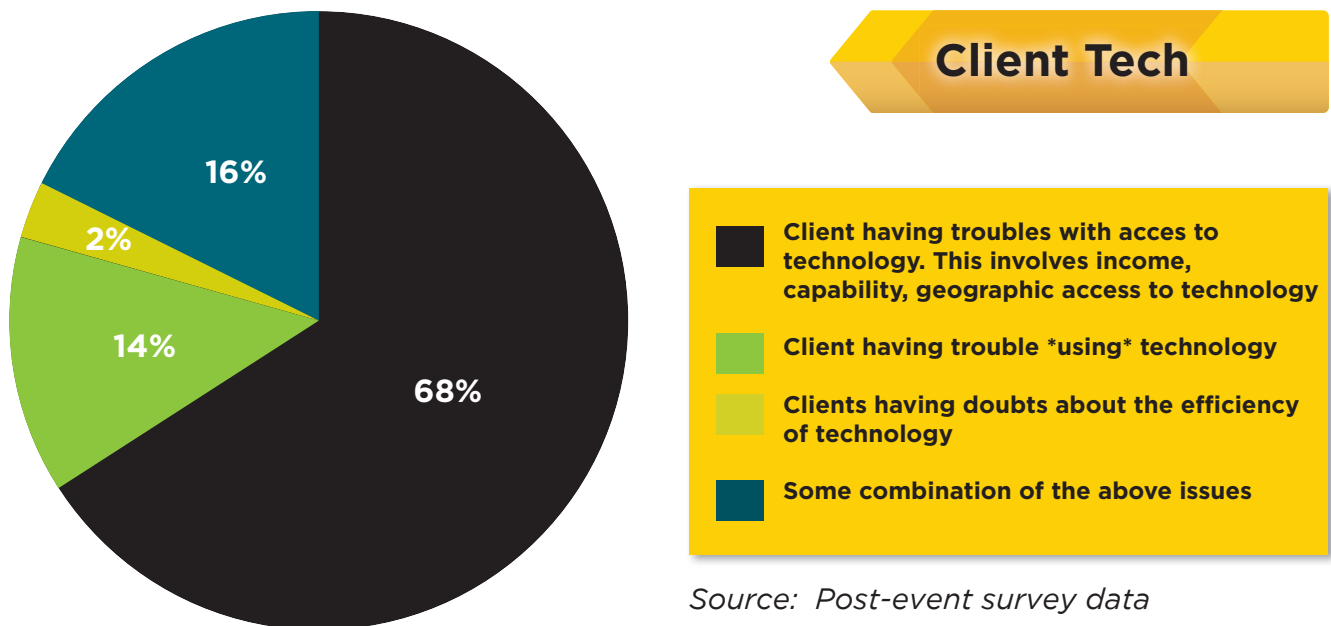
Employment service provider **know-how** on how to use technology in a way that benefits clients and encourages further client participation in services:

- Breakout participants expressed a lack of comfort providing virtual service delivery given their level of experience with that form of service provision. They believed that there was a gap between what clients needed and what they were able to offer. 11 out of the 24 tech themes touched on this. Some of the comments included; “In order to promote systems change, mandatory digital tools training needed to occur for ESPs” (Ontario). Another example is that some felt that they had issues determining “how to engage youth virtually, especially if they have mental health issues” (Saskatchewan/ Manitoba). Most communicated exhaustion with virtual technology use.



Post-event survey results

Figure 7 Panel B
Technology access, use and impact on clients



For this particular theme, out of the respondents who cited the client-tech relationship as an issue, a stunning 68% of respondents found that a challenge moving forward would be their clients having trouble with access to technology. This involved income, capability, and geographic access. Seven percent cited as a challenge that clients have issues ‘using’ technology, while 2% cited that clients themselves had expressed concerns with the efficiency of technology. Finally, 16% cited a combination of the above concerns.

It is clear from these responses that technology access for the clients they serve is a serious concern and it could be the single largest impediment for clients given the virtual nature of service delivery at this time.

Breakout results

Client **access** to physical hardware and software like computers/tablets, Wi-Fi etc.:

- This was one of the top concerns for ESPs, 10 out of the 24 tech themes touched on this concern. ESPs find themselves not only figuring out how to engage youth virtually given their multiple barriers, but they emphasize that often the issue is a lack of access to the right hardware, and even an internet connection to participate virtually. This came in the form of 'Issues with Access to technology, particularly with those furthest away from employment already.'- (Maritimes/ EN Quebec)

Client **know-how** and comfort level with accessing services virtually:

- Recognizing the hardware/software issues that youth clients might face in accessing services virtually, there is an acknowledgement that youth clients are also adapting to this new form of service delivery and might therefore not feel comfortable fully engaging virtually. This concern is compounded in the theme 'we need to keep in mind the needs and difficulties clients face accessing service virtually, that is why we must offer a variety of options for them to engage, whether that be online through webinars, teleconferences, or by phone.' (Quebec).

Tech as having the potential to be exclusionary/Inclusionary:

- Some see tech as a new tool that needs to be crafted and properly used in order to avoid further marginalizing the clients they serve. They argue that tech has great potential to be a key part of service delivery moving forward, but that it should be designed in a way that keeps the most marginalized groups in mind. This is exemplified by the comment 'Digital platforms: adapted to persons with disabilities' (British Columbia/ Yukon/ Northwest Territories)

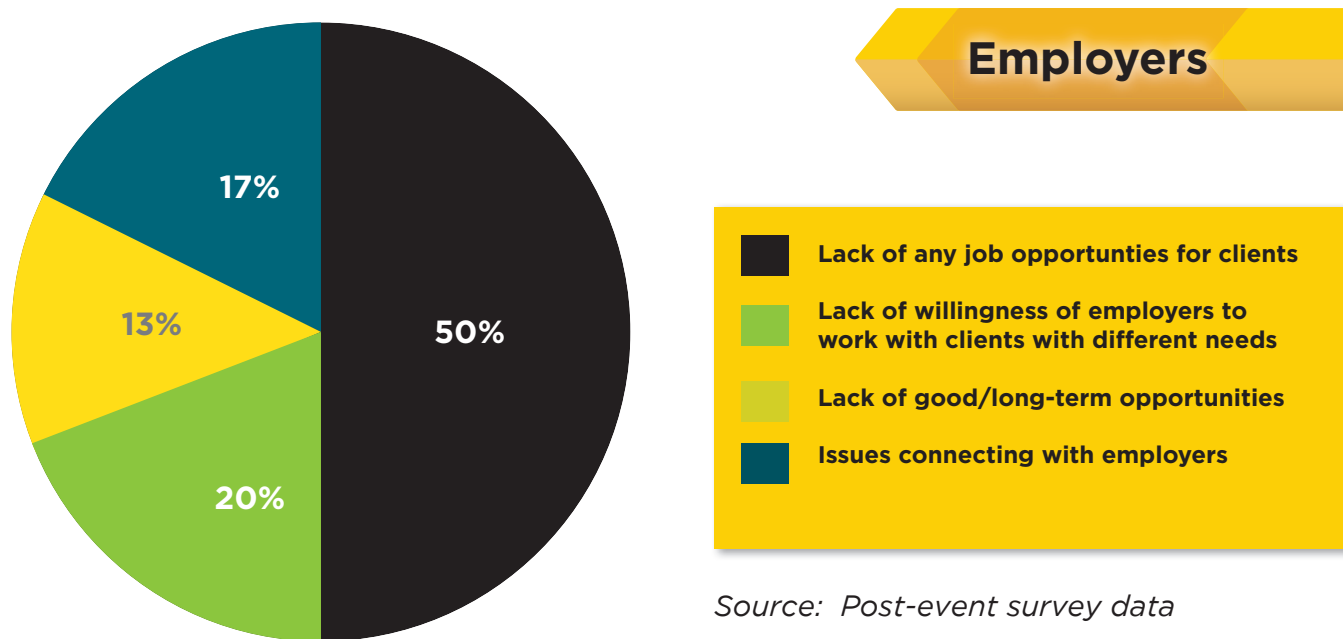
Theme 2: Employers

Concerns about adequate employer interest or capability in mitigating problems

Post-event survey results

As seen on Figure 8, of the 85 respondents on the post-event survey, 50 cited some employer-related issue as a challenge. Of those 50 citing these concerns, that it had to do specifically with the lack of jobs they were seeing/expecting for their clients. 20% thought getting employers to work with/employ clients with special needs was a challenge. The remaining 13% identified the challenge of finding good long-term, or safe job opportunities and 17% thought it would be difficult to connect with employers at this time to create jobs.

Figure 8
Employer-related concerns



Breakout results

The deep concern expressed by practitioners was that there were few opportunities for their clients in terms of employment. This concern is reasonable given the circumstances that COVID-19 has brought, particularly for their clients with barriers or special needs. At issue was communication with employers, i.e., the ability under altered circumstances to better connect employment services to employers in their area, with the aim of understanding what employers wanted from a candidate or an employee.

The concern of finding good, long-term and/or safe opportunities was brought up as well “Finding employers who take health and safety seriously in a pandemic - ethical implications of connecting youth to an unsafe job.” (BC/YK/NWT)

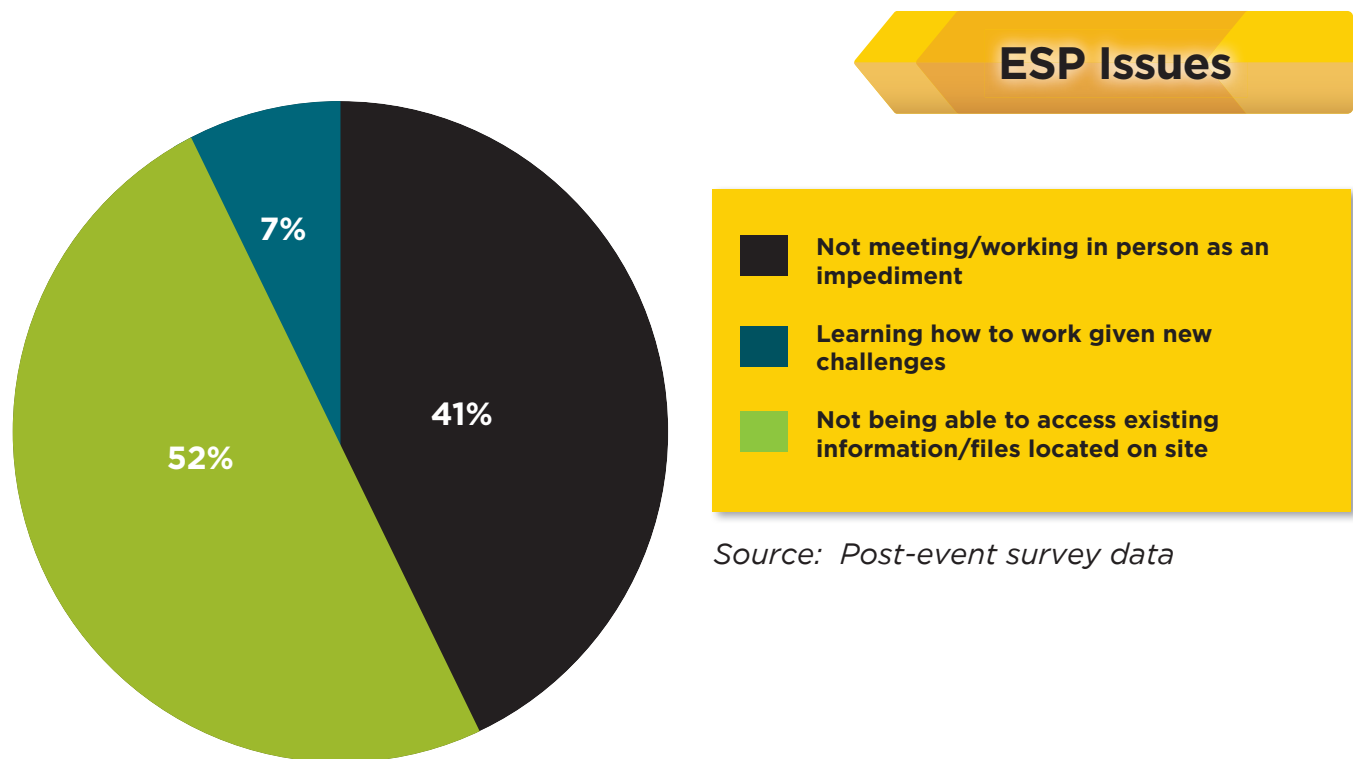
Survey respondents seemed to be more concerned with the lack of employment opportunities for their clients than the breakout participants who were more concerned with the issues around communication with employers. That said, both breakout participants and survey respondents were concerned about the lack of connection and opportunities that a strained relationship with employers could bring which would adversely affect ESP clients.

Theme 3: ESP-identified issues

Concerns surrounding virtual work and changed circumstances for ESPs themselves

Post-event survey results

Figure 9
ESP-related concerns



Source: Post-event survey data

34% of the 85 post-event survey respondents cited some issue they were personally having as a challenge. Of them, **52%** said that learning to cope and work in a remote or virtual setting and all the unforeseen circumstances that come from that has been and continues to be a challenge. Being unable to meet in person or work with their clients was cited as an impediment that made up **41%** of responses. Last, **seven percent** stated that not being able to access client files was an issue.

The thirty respondents responding this way were pessimistic about being able to adequately serve their clients remotely. They felt that this type of work was detrimental to their service delivery. This theme presented itself in the discussions as well.

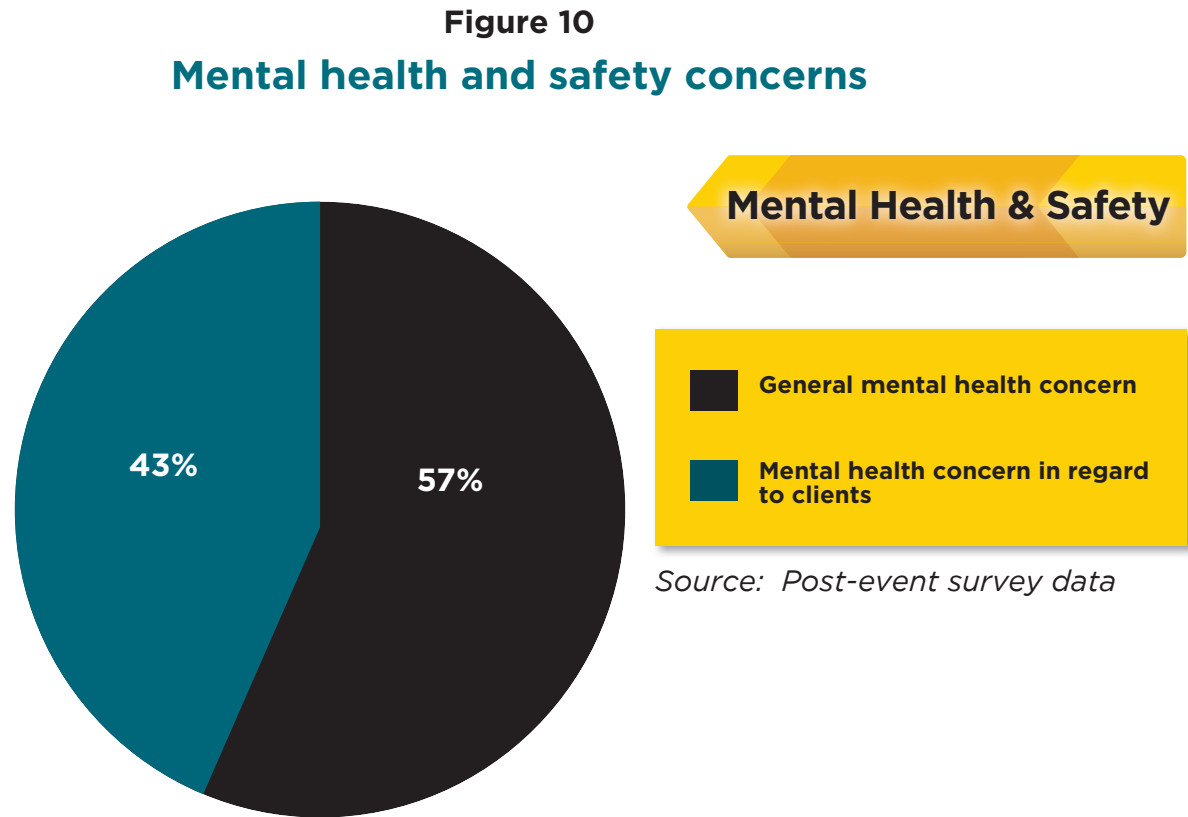
Breakout results

The concerns that were brought up in the breakouts varied from acknowledging that mental health supports for employment workers are needed, to ensuring that information sharing was happening between workers as they tackled new issues during the pandemic. These themes were brought up in the context of a group setting, which may have had an effect on the answers and points they raised. Survey respondents had both more time and privacy to bring up some of the issues they were personally dealing with and this might have affected the frequency at which ESP-specific concerns were brought up in the survey.

Theme 4: Mental health and safety

Concerns for themselves and clients while navigating this difficult time.

Post-Event Survey Results



Mental health and safety concerns showed up in **27%** of post-event survey responses. It is a common concern amongst survey respondents. Mental health was brought up a handful of times in the context of practitioner mental health and youth mental health supports in the discussions too.

Of those respondents citing mental health and safety concerns, **57%** had general mental health concerns, for both themselves and their clients and **44%** cited the health concerns they had specifically for their clients navigating this difficult time.

Breakout results

It is interesting to note that breakout participants brought this theme up only a handful of times as far as an area of future exploration and opportunity, but when it was framed as a question of challenges in the survey, respondents were quick to point out the lack of mental health resources and support as an issue. This might be as a result of how the breakout questions and discussion were framed. It could also be that mental health support was a 'given' for town hall participants as youth clients with mental health issues were cited as the most served population in the registration survey. Perhaps that was the reason for this specific topic coming up as an explicit theme during the town halls.

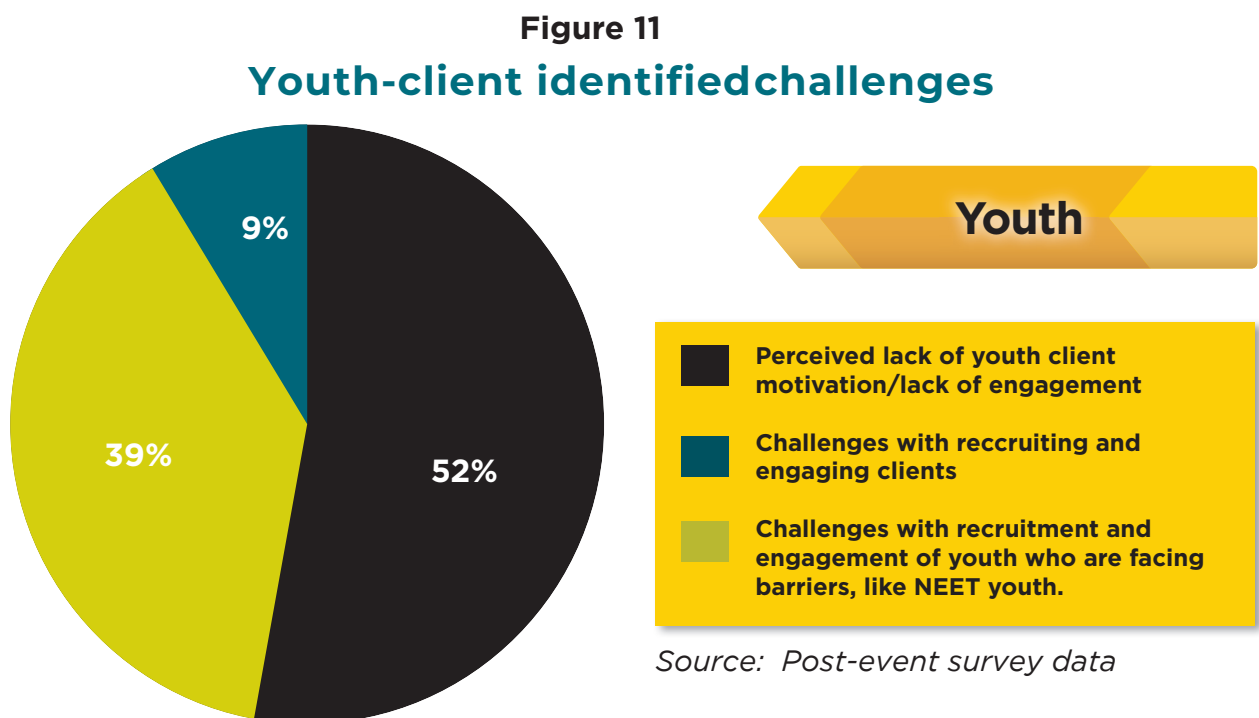
Theme 5: Youth

Adjustment and motivation challenges faced by youth in light of emergency benefits.

Post-Event Survey Results

In the post-event survey, 17 respondents brought up client adjustment and motivation, unconnected with technological adjustment issues at least once. Nine of them were concerned about the perceived lack of motivation that they saw from their clients in regards to accessing services and looking for work.

Of course, this may be expected given the fear of working during the pandemic and the general mental health issues that individuals may be dealing with. Around six found that it was challenging to recruit youth into employment services and to effectively engage those who had already accessed services. Two people found that recruiting and engaging youth with barriers was particularly difficult. This breakdown can be seen in Figure 11 below.



Source: Post-event survey data

Breakout results

According to employment services practitioners, their youth-clients were struggling and many practitioners are unsure of how to best support them. In the breakout discussions, the troubles of youth clients showed up **10** out of **78** times, the third most important theme. Engaging youth clients, and supporting them through this difficult time was brought up much like in the survey. Breakout participants also echoed the findings of the survey. “Engaging youth clients into services, it’s true that it is difficult!” (Francophone session) There were some issues brought up around the mental health of their clients also being a challenge, “need to enhance mental health support - more awareness and better understanding” (Maritimes). This topic was more detailed in the survey as shown in Figure 10 presented earlier.

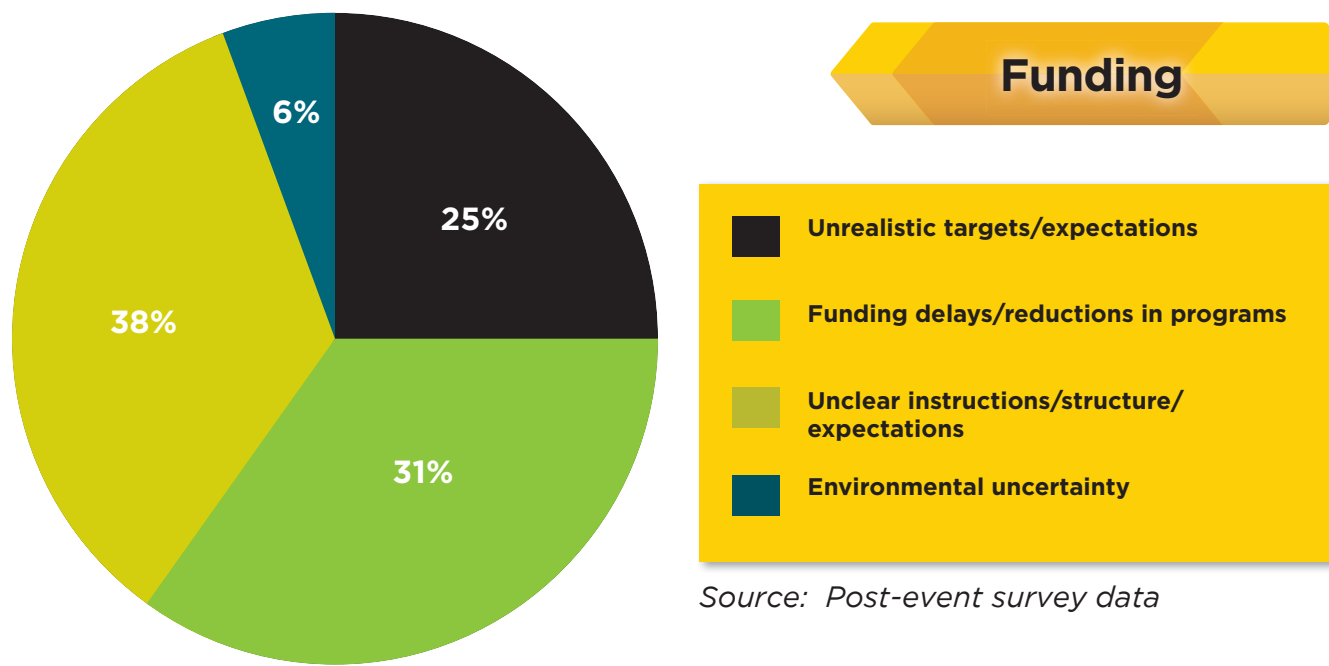
Theme 6: Funding

Insecurity regarding funding due to delays and lack of flexibility to adjust to shifting needs brought on by pandemic.

Post-event survey results

Of the 85 respondents, 15 of the survey respondents cited funding as a challenge or concern in the survey.

Figure 12
Funding challenges



As seen in Figure 12, 38% found that there were unclear instructions, structure and funding expectations communicated which led to confusion in service delivery. 31% found that managing funding delays and reductions was a challenge, while 25% found that unrealistic funding expectations partly stemming from unchanged targets (even during a pandemic) were a challenge. Finally, 6% cited general environmental uncertainty as a concern.

It is evident that respondents felt some insecurity from their funding sources, and many were concerned by the lack of clarity and communication.

Breakout results

In the breakouts, participants brought up issues of funding 9% of the time. Much like the survey respondents, there was talk of what they needed as practitioners in terms of funding to make their interventions successful. This was articulated as the “need to shift budget from classroom/travel to tech-related purchases, e.g. smart boards or tech for clients,” as some practitioners from the Maritimes said. They expressed that funding expectations and targets had to be adjusted given the unprecedented times.

It is clear that funding was a concern for employment service professionals, though it was not an immediate one as it was raised less frequently than other themes discussed earlier.

Theme 7: Data issues

A variety of issues around what data is collected to measure success and availability of labour market data to better match youth to jobs.

Data discussions occurred mostly during the breakout sessions, and were not brought up in the survey as much. The concerns were mostly client-based. The dominant themes were, “Have a new conversation about what outcomes and indicators to measure for success.” (Saskatchewan/ Manitoba), or around finding job opportunities, “Identifying labour market opportunities for youth that don’t rely on tech” (Ontario). It seems that the data piece was intertwined with other themes discussed above, and it may be that data is an integral component of addressing the issues of technology and opportunity/job creation, not a stand-alone issue that is present in the minds of practitioners.

The word 'data' formed 17% of the 78 qualitative themes during the in-depth discussion; themes with the word 'data' in them came up 13 times. We have to note that 'concerns about data' was one of the three questions brought up for discussion during those discussions.

During the survey, the same participants were not particularly compelled to bring up issues around data collection or access to data (it came up only 8% of the time in the survey). In fact, when there was no prompt in the post-event survey to focus on data or data-related challenges, respondents did not bring it up.

This indicates that data may not be as important for practitioners in comparison to the other challenges they were facing.

POST-COVID PLANS AND FORECASTS

Views, perceptions and recovery

A majority of post-survey respondents, 58% felt somewhat prepared to handle the challenges created by the COVID-19 shutdown. Around a quarter of all 85 respondents felt adequately prepared, while 10% indicated that they were [fully] prepared. These imply that the sector was in a general state of preparedness but could benefit from additional support. The majority of respondents felt that the challenges presented above were enough to counter the preparedness of the sector. These are presented in the pie chart in Figure 13.

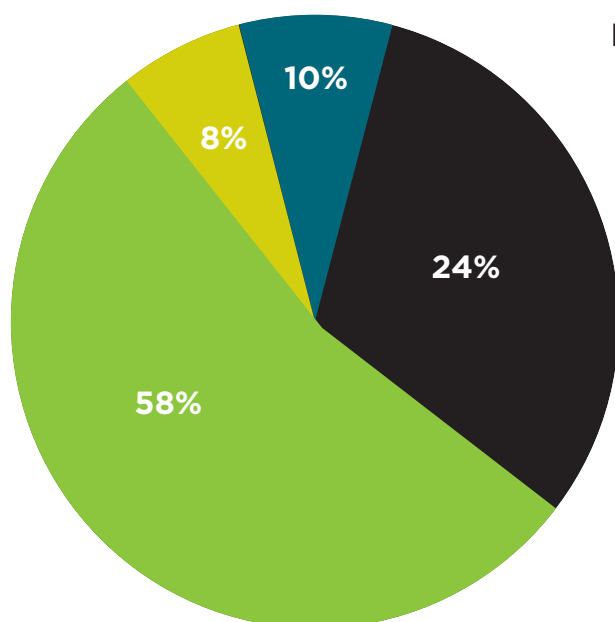


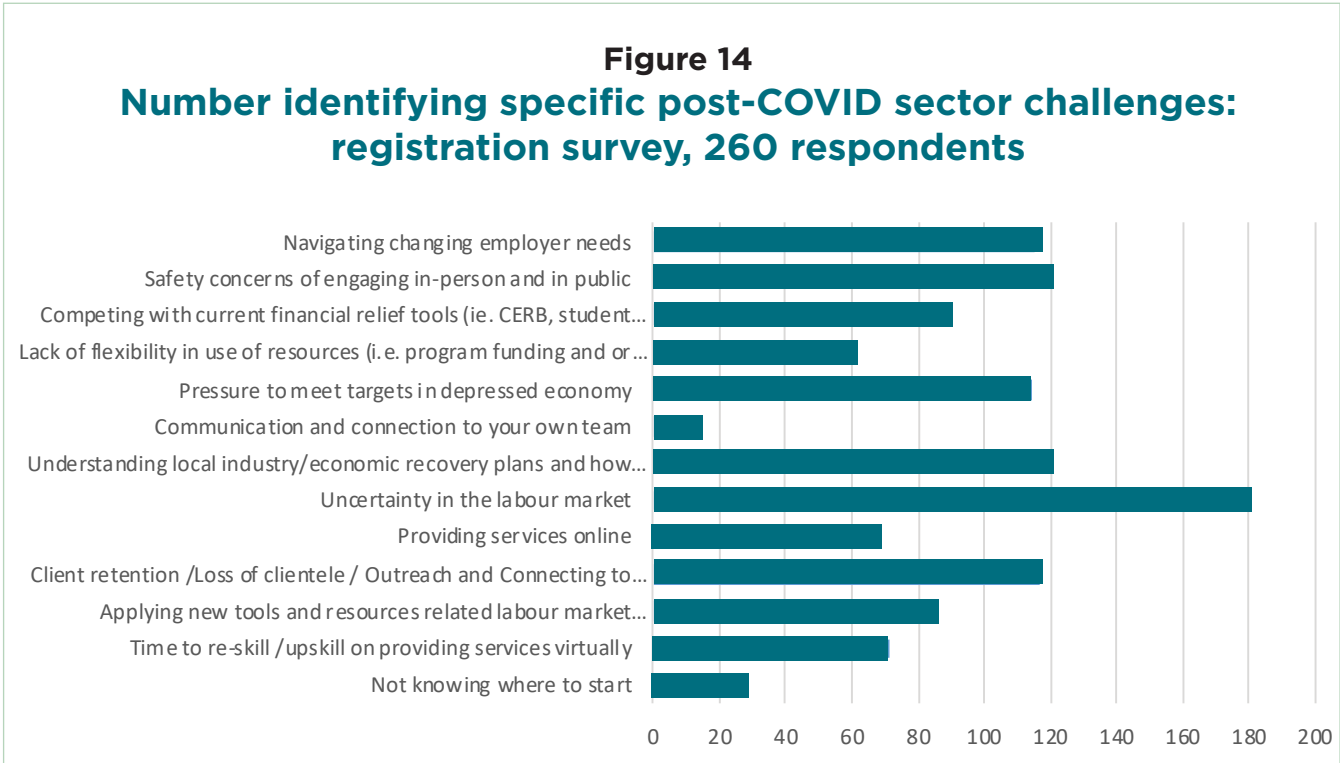
Figure 13

Based on the discussion today and your own experience, how equipped is the employment sector to provide post-COVID recovery support to clients?

- Prepared
- Mostly prepared
- Somewhat prepared
- Not prepared

Source: Post-event survey data

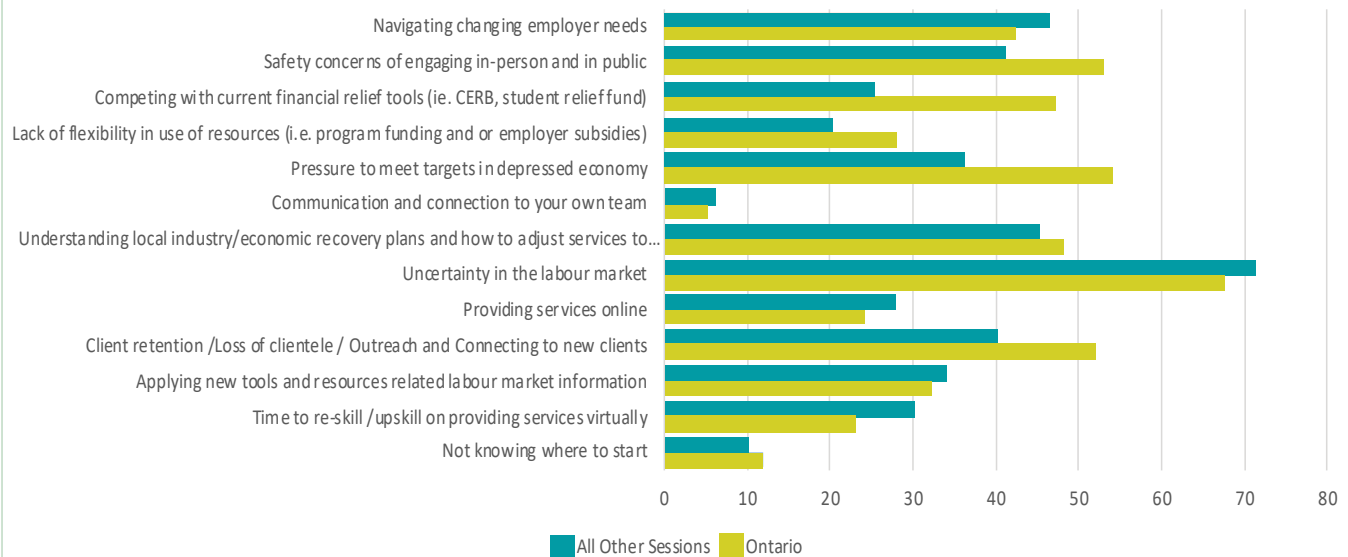
While the employment services sector appeared moderately prepared, practitioners identified some very specific challenges to resuming work in a post-COVID environment. Just 10% of 260 registered respondents who answered the registration survey said that they were completely unprepared to resume work. Most respondents were able to clearly name specific problems that they were sure to encounter in post-COVID conditions. These are summarized in Figure 14 below:



Source: Data compiled from registration data.

There are some interesting regional differences that appear when we look at the same issue of challenges with resuming work post-COVID, contrasting Ontario with other sessions. These are reported in Figure 15 below. We use Ontario as the bench-mark because responses from Ontario represent the average for Canada, statistically in this sample.

Figure 15
Challenges to resuming work post COVID:
Ontario vs other sessions regions



Source: Data compiled from registration data.

According to Figure 15, 47% of Ontario’s respondents believed that competing with financial relief tools (ie. CERB, student relief fund) was a challenge to resuming, whereas only 25% of practitioners from the remaining six regions believed that was a problem to their resumption of work; a lower than ‘normal’ incidence. Ontario ESPs were concerned that CERB was a deterrent to the youth accessing their services, i.e., looking for work. Not so for other regions.

Some of the challenges above can be addressed by prioritizing certain adjustment and recovery measures over others.

When post-event survey respondents were asked to choose the main priority regarding COVID-19 recovery efforts, 33% believed that providing better access and funding for technology was a priority, seen in Figure 16. This response was not particularly surprising given the findings of both the breakout and identified challenges from the post-event survey.

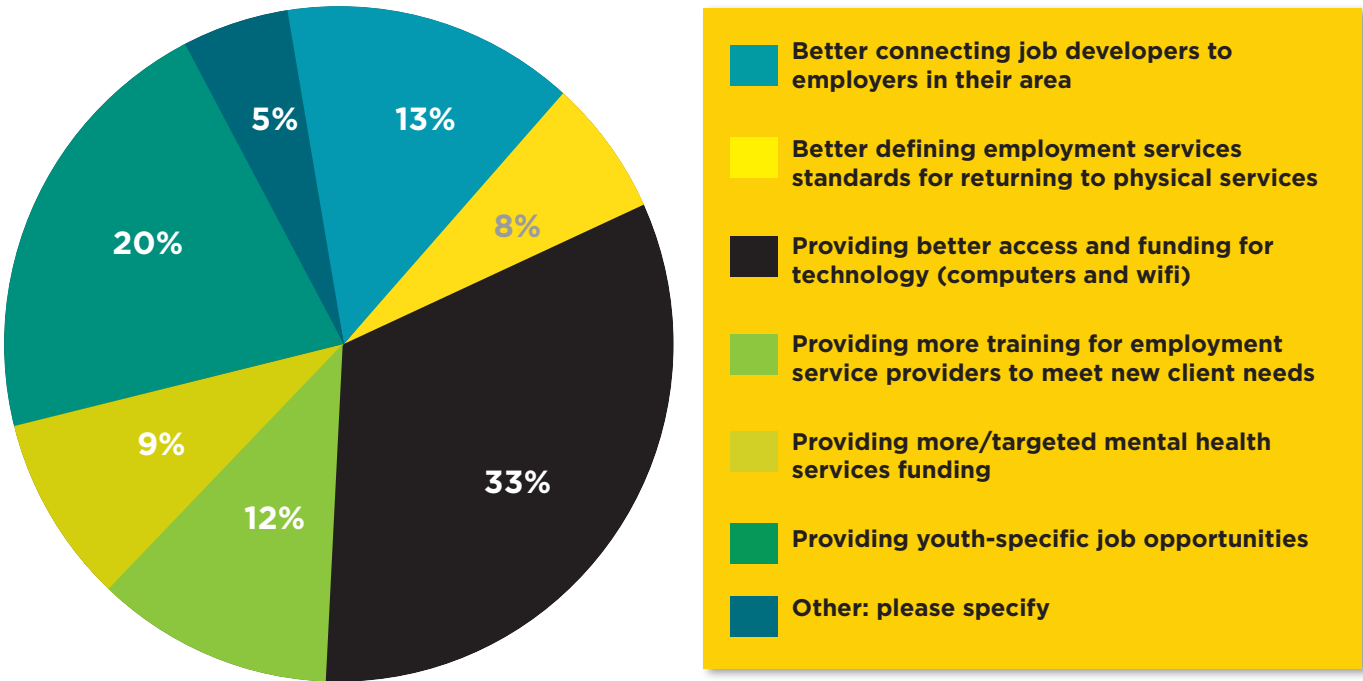
Also from Figure 16, 20% of respondents believed that the main priority should be to provide youth-specific job opportunities.

Some respondents, (13%) indicated that improving connections between job developers and employers in their area was a key priority in improving youth-specific job opportunities. This might be useful when considering youth with barriers who possibly access employment services, and building relationships with employers that are willing and open to take on such youth in partnership with service organizations.

Other suggested strategies at 10% of the 85 respondents are: providing more targeted mental health funding, and better defining employment service standards for returning to physical service delivery.

Figure 16

Based on the discussion, what should be the main priority of COVID-19 recovery efforts to improve on the score given above?



Source: Post-event survey

PARTICIPANT EVALUATIONS

Assessments from the sector

We had two objectives in organizing the National Town Hall sessions and administering surveys. First, faced with an unprecedented contraction in economic activity and a spike in youth unemployment necessitated our learning of specific problems and possible solutions from the youth employment sector as they saw it. Second, creating a forum for practitioners

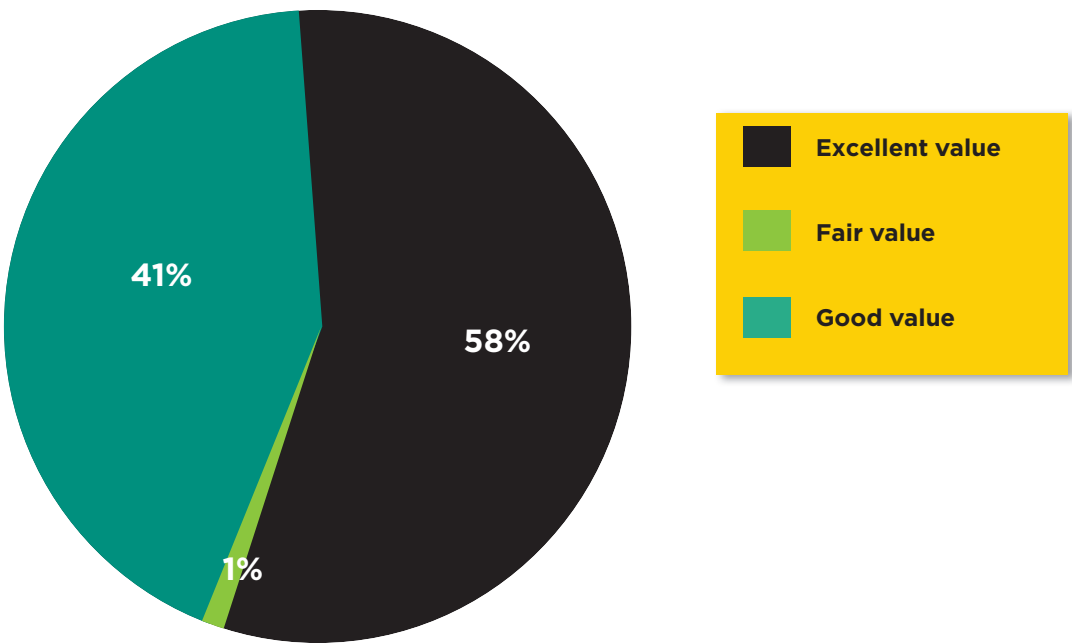
to share freely and learn from one another in a collaborative setting to take back to their organizations.

The first objective was met by the results from the registration survey and the discussions from the town halls. The registration survey was detailed enough for us to learn about the practitioners themselves, the people they helped and the challenges and problems they faced due to the COVID economic contraction. Furthermore, the survey had a response rate of 63% which itself was very close to the sessional event participation rate of 67% lending strength to analyses.

The second objective was met by the town hall event itself and the post-event survey, with the former providing the forum to share ideas and opinions, while the latter afforded an alternative (but weaker) support with the same objective. Although participation in the town hall was 67%, the post-event survey had a significantly lower response rate of 24% despite incentives delivered. We could interpret the lower post-event survey rates in many ways: (i) survey weariness, (ii) possible repetitiveness of the survey that acted as a deterrent to participation, (iii) it provided a place for session participants to add last minute thoughts. If it is the last factor, then one of the goals of the post-event survey is satisfied.

However, in general participants of the town hall event and the post-event survey reported satisfaction as seen in the poll results and discussions below.

Figure 17
Did you find this type of convening of the sector valuable?



A majority of respondents found this event of excellent value. When pressed on the matter to determine where CCYP and partner organizations should place their efforts moving forward, respondents provided a variety of suggestions.

These included:

- Holding more discussions like the town halls.
- Facilitating a way for employment service professionals to communicate with each other in a Pan-Canadian way about their learnings, success, and recommendations.

From the breakouts and discussions during the town hall sessions we learned that many employment service practitioners felt overwhelmed and required a forum to share their frustrations, while sharing tips on how to deal with the COVID-19 shutdown.

From our three-stage information-gathering process, we gained insight into the following:

I The profiles of the sector on these National Town Halls and whom they served.

The town halls were a forum for primarily employment services practitioners rather than other sector members: the youth and employers. Ontario was dominant at an average of 42% participation in all the 'points of contact' with the remaining presence distributed amongst six other sessions. We had a 'U' shaped representation by seniority with early career and late career participants at 75% of participants, mid-career not so much. Senior executives of the sector practitioners comprised the most significant group. Lots of managers of ESPs.

All the participants served a diversity of clients, simultaneously; we do not see specialization in any one youth client category. All kinds of services were offered, yet career exploration and counseling was most frequently offered. Some services appear to depend on seniority more than others, like job retention services.

II Impacts of COVID-19 shutdowns on the sector, on the clientele served, and the sector workers themselves.

While there were some issues of participants incorrectly identifying sectors in their regions that were most affected by youth unemployment, that the COVID-19 shutdown has had a significant impact on youth development is clear to them. Practitioners recounted personal impacts and professional impacts. Most ESP workers adjusted to working from home, full time. A minority had resumed in-person service delivery. Service delivery most affected by the COVID contraction were clearly identified. The largest disruptions in service delivery were in pre-employment job preparation and placements followed by skills training, job retention and employer services.

While employment service agencies were adjusting to the COVID-19 circumstances and anticipating challenges to resuming work, we found that they trusted the

government and health authorities the most as disseminators of COVID-related information compared to their employers or professional networks.

III

Challenges being encountered by the employment services sector and strategies to address them.

Of the many issues raised by ESPs, two themes emerged as most important from the information gathering exercises: Technology, and the role of employers in job creation and willingness to engage ESP clients. The 'Tech issue' itself was complex because there were serious problems with access, use and effectiveness, both for ESPs and their clientele. With respect to the role of employers, it was a lack of employer interest that was most troubling for ESPs. However, there were at least five other real challenges that the ESPs said they were facing.

Most felt dissatisfied with the backing that they were receiving from governments and were concerned about operating in a climate of labour uncertainty as the economy began reopening. In fact, this particular concern regarding uncertainty was cited most often by them as a barrier to resuming work.

Despite the uncertainty and frustration felt by many, a sentiment expressed clearly to us was the caring for their clientele in a confused time.

In terms of actionable strategies, many expressed access and funding for more technological support as one means. Another was expanding youth-specific job opportunities.

Both of these can be adapted towards a youth employment recovery strategy to be deployed by different levels of government. These interactive town hall sessions have given us some insight, enabling us to draft a way forward for the sector, for us as partners and for the government to best address the challenges raised by practitioners.



FUTURE AREAS FOR EXPLORATION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

For CCYP and partners

- 1 Responses from session participants and survey respondents have shown that coordination and information sharing are still a problem. It is important to explore the ways in which employment service professionals can be encouraged and empowered to share their experiences and best practices. Continued engagement and communication with the community is the way forward.
- 2 Building a resource base about specific concerns raised by employment service practitioners will be a constructive extension of the information analyzed from this event. For example, building on CCYP initiatives, like our ongoing digital software tracking project to make it relevant to concerns discussed by practitioners during the Town Halls is a step in that direction.
- 3 Streamlining information gathering processes from different sources so that comprehensive analyses may be performed. For instance, the post-event survey suffered a 63-point reduction in participation compared to the registration survey. Administering the surveys better so that such differences are minimized is a lesson learned.

Policy recommendations for government

- 1 **Investment in the sector's digital capacity and infrastructure to improve essential support and employability skills for youth, especially NEET youth.** Concerns surrounding technology, accessing it, using it and its effectiveness in addressing the problems youth were facing during the COVID shutdowns were consistently raised during the town halls and the survey. Employment service providers should not have to rely on personal devices or shooting professional videos using phone cameras to communicate delicate and difficult information to their youth clients, as was related to us. Providers who depend on public funding should have technology fund allocations where they can successfully connect with their youth clients during times of social distancing and where in-person services are reduced.

We urge the government to fund a "Technology Endowment" for employment service providers, for these organizations to prepare young people and themselves for this new paradigm. This technology fund will allow employment service providers to provide youth with the hardware needed to thrive in this digital world, and the training to use it.

- 2 Prioritize the creation of 'rapid response' jobs for youth as part of short-term COVID recovery efforts.** Employment service practitioners recognized that the lack of employer interest towards youth job opportunities arose from uncertainty. In order to stimulate youth employment, 'rapid response' job programs or an expanded system of wage and employment subsidies for youth will address these concerns. There is evidence that such active labour policy tools raise short-term employment, thereby reducing economic uncertainty.

The government has begun investing in rapid response employment programs such as Pivot 2020 - a program that will provide more than 1,200 young across Canada with paid, virtual research jobs this fall. This rapid response initiative is a partnership with CCYP, Tamarack Institute, SFU Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue, Canadian Urban Institute, and Institut du Nouveau Monde and is funded by the Government of Canada. We have a long recovery period ahead of us and encourage government to continue supporting these types of interventions.

- 3 Recognize the impact on mental health for job seekers and practitioners and provide a broader range of supports.** ESPs told us the incidence of mental health problems and anxiety have increased during the pandemic and that they find social isolation has worsened these states for their youth clients (and even themselves). The impacts are deep and varied. To counter these effects, employment service practitioners must be better supported in budgetary allocations to connect their clients (and themselves) with the appropriate and remote mental health support services to access the care both require, that are often not covered in provincial health plans or the mental health programs already funded by governments.

We urge the government to make resources more flexible and less tied to specific mental health support programs to respond to this need. We call for integration mental health care services with employment services for those people requiring both, as such a practice has been shown to be effective.

- 4 Expand education and skills training options and specific programs for youth as they retrain and adapt for an altered workplace.** ESPs were concerned about the impact of COVID-19 on youth motivation and recruitment for services. Both are the result of reduced employment opportunities because of the economic contraction. Expanding education and skills training opportunities through institutions and programming is a way to induce youth to re-enter the labour force in the future as the economy recovers.

We urge the government to modify emergency income supports like employment insurance by tying them to retraining and up-skilling opportunities. This can be achieved by comprehensively amending Labour Market Development Agreements (LMDAs) and Workforce Development Agreements (WDAs) with each province and territory to include skills training program expansion for youth.

5 Data dissemination for employment services providers must be improved.

ESPs perceive a lack of availability of relevant labour market intelligence to inform their counsel and intervention for youth making their own career choices. They indicated that to facilitate recovery for youth employment, access to labour market data was an important factor. While availability of data is not at issue in reality, it is the dissemination method that makes it inaccessible for people outside the purview of researchers.

We urge the government to improve data dissemination methods of existing statistical data by providing it for diverse audiences. A few provinces have found ways to make existing statistical data accessible and these practices can be more widely adopted by provinces and the federal government. We urge the government to provide analyzed metadata (with the appropriate citizen safeguards) for satisfying short-term changes in the labour market using open data and API protocols to improve its accessibility.

APPENDIX

Ontario						
	Room 1	Room 2	Room 3	Room 4	Room 5	Room 6
Theme 1	Flexibility in tools and resources to equip staff: access to tech for youth	More flexibility in funding	Tailoring youth digital services to promote social interaction	Accessibility to Technology	Hybrid service delivery: virtual and face to face	Focus on Technology and Mental Health
Theme 2	Data collection to better understand which groups most affected: especially with the further isolation of youth more removed from tech	Digital/ Technology access for youth	Making existing government systems more flexible and employer friendly: to encourage them to hire youth through their programming	Systems change- in digital tools for service provision: Mandatory training in digital tools	Race-based data outcome collection	Soft Skills
Theme 3	Engaging with employers: More information on growing industries, more support for youth/ employers during placements	Identifying labour market opportunities for youth that don't rely on tech	Information sharing to determine best practices	Funding for Wrap - around services	Improve access to Technology: software and hardware	Mental Health

Alberta	
Room 1	Room 2
Exploring tech: to drive inclusive workforces	Flexibility and response time
Measuring youth engagement: where it takes place and what is most effective	Admitting we can do better at systemic response
Mental Health support for workers, especially remotely	Youth is the key focus

Sask/Manitoba Room 1	Room 2	Room 3	Room 4
Helping employers create new work experiences for youth	Using and learning digital tools for service delivery	Tech hardware/ software issues	Technology as a tool to learn from, continue to use
Have a new conversation about what outcomes and indicators to measure for success	how many candidates do employers interview, what is the response rate? what makes a good rate for response in an employer market?	Supporting youth in remote environments	Career mapping, real-time reopening data, digital literacy/ language barriers
Staying connected to other practitioners (not reinventing the wheel on resources) connect with other trying to do the same thing	How to engage with youth virtually, especially with mental health issues	Need to adapt to pace of change	National training/list of success stories/ best practices. Mentorship for resiliency

BC/YK/NMT Room 1	Room 2	Room 3	Room 4
Finding employers who taking health and safety seriously in a pandemic - ethical implications of connecting youth to an unsafe job.	Digital platforms: adapted to persons with disabilities	1. more funding for youth programs- multi-year funding 2. more incentives to hire youth, inclusive training for the benefits of hiring those with disabilities. 3. Technology can help through companies, in collaboration with gov't providing device to low income youth	Technology is a challenging solution
thinking beyond single outcome focus of labour market attachment - literacy, return to school, completion of training to be considered	instead of government just counting the # of job placements, they refer to the # of youth who are job-ready, upskilled and trained, how do the youth feel about their skill set	Need for disaggregated Data	Employer Investment in skill development
advocating for broader support and interventions - basic income support - think of CERB as a safety measure	Cooperative relationship with government, how can they hire more this summer, not less?	More feedback from providers to inform gov't and funding model decisions	Free education and access to training programs

Maritimes			
Room 1	Room 2	Room 3	Room 4
adjusting outcomes and expectations in terms of funding to capture true effort and range of work being done	Issues with Access to technology, particularly with those furthest away from employment already.	need to shift budget from classroom/travel to tech-related purchases E.g. smart boards or tech for clients. also need to consider child care as not all schools and childcare is open	Increasing Access to Tech
Equipment and virtual access	National platform to track unemployment and labour demand, create a mobile workforce.	Determine ways to track digital Literacy levels	Work with and improve on programs and data that we know
need to enhance mental health support - more awareness and better understanding	More flexibility to support clients in different ways whether it be food security, housing etc. outside the scope of	my program. Training on how to get virtual training interesting and keeping participants engaged	Digital literacy support for youth and employers as we are moving to virtual platforms

Quebec		
Room 1	Room 2	Room 3
En tenant compte des besoins et des difficultés des jeunes, adapter et offrir des services en ligne: webinaires, téléconférence, téléphone.	Accès aux services en ligne difficiles pour les clientèles marginalisées	Formation informelle sur les technologies au travers des rencontres avec les intervenants
Organismes : mieux connaître types de métier recherchés et secteurs d'activités plébiscités par les jeunes VS besoins employeurs	Entretenir des liens avec les employeurs pour mieux comprendre les besoins et les nouveaux enjeux de nos milieux;	Exemple concret d'un processus d'embauche plus rapide (agilité), en ligne, avec une réponse immédiate
nous avons un besoin de financement pour développer nos idées de projets.	Créer et maintenir un lien à distance difficile avec les jeunes	Rapport avec les employeurs: se faire solliciter, aller à leur rencontre

Francophone Room 1	Room 2	Room 3
Offrir des webinaires aux participants sur les employeurs qui recrutent, sur la façon de postuler en ligne, sur les entrevues virtuelles	L'accès à la technologie est un obstacle	Événements de recrutement en ligne (avec coaching avant et après l'entrevue et prise de parole de l'employeur)
Quel sera l'impact de la situation actuelle sur les clientèles les plus vulnérables?	Comment ils se sentent face à la pandémie? pour adapter l'offre de services	Degré d'ouverture à travailler avec un jeune novice ou éloigné du marché du travail
Plus de mentorat pour les jeunes, pas seulement au niveau professionnel, pour les aider à gérer leur anxiété et à définir leur projet de vie	Besoin de temps. Tout est à modifier (transformer tout ce que je faisais en groupe en personne en ligne, outils utilisés au quotidien, formulaires de consentement)	Attirer les jeunes dans les services d'aide ! C'est vrai que c'est difficile!

TABLE OF NON-PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS:

Organization	Number of Participants
360kids	1
AB Labour and Immigration	1
Accès-Travail de Montréal	1
actions interculturelles	1
Agilec	1
Alliance carrière travail	1
Amith Goodwill Industries	1
Argus Residence for Young People	1
ASPECT BC	1
BC Centre for Women in the Trades	3
Beacon Community Services	1
Black Women in Motion	1
Boy	1
Bredin Centre for Learning	1
Calgary Catholic Immigration Society	1
Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work (CCRW)	1
Canadian Gap Year Association	1
Canadian Mennonite University	1
Canadian Mental Health Association	1
Canadian Skills Training and Employment Coalition	1
Canadian Training Institute	1
CanAssist	2
Career Assistance Network	1
Career Centre	1
CareerLink	4
Carleton University	1
Carrefour Jeunesse Emploi	21
Causeway	1
CBDC Restigouche	4
CBI Consultants	3
CCRW	2
CDENE	2
CDETNO	2
CEI-StFX	1
Centre de recherche D'emploi Beauce -Etchemins	1
Centre for Education & Training	2
Centre for Resilience and Social Development	1
Centre for Skills Development	2
CERF Niagara	1
CIEL / CJE des Collines-de-l'Outaouais	1
CivicAction	1

CIWA	1
CLBC	1
Code Youth	1
Collectif des entreprises d'insertion du Québec	1
Community Employment Services	3
Community Futures North Okanagan	1
Community Living Sarnia Lambton	2
Community Sector Council Newfoundland and Labrador	1
Concordia University	1
Construction Association of PEI	2
Covenant House Toronto	1
CTI	1
DIVERSEcity	1
Dixon Hall	2
EAC	1
Easter Seals Nova Scotia	1
Edmonton Public Schools	1
Edwards Career Services - University of Saskatchewan	1
Edwards School of Business	1
Emergency Services Achievement Program	1
Employment + Education Centre	1
Employment Hamilton	1
Employment North	1
Employment Transitions - jobPath	1
Empower, The Disability Resource Centre	1
Espace carrière	1
Eth??s Lab	1
ETHOS	1
Fanshawe College	1
First Work	2
FOCUS Community Development Corp.	1
FW	1
Gateway Association	1
Girls Incorporated of Limestone, Algonquin and Lakeshore	1
Global Shapers Vancouver	1
Goodwill Niagara	4
Government of Alberta	1
Grand Erie District School Board CareerLink	1
Groupe Orientation Emploi	1
Helping Hands	1
HIEC	1
Horton Ventures	1
Human Development Council	1
Humber College	3
Hutton House Employment	1
Imagine Canada	1

Inclusion Winnipeg Inc.	1
Independent Living Nova Scotia	5
Intégration Compétences	1
Intentional Careers HR	1
IQVIA	1
ISANS	3
ISSofBC	2
Jasper Employment & Education Centre	1
JobStart	1
John Howard Socieity of Niagara	4
Just a Guy	1
KCDA	1
Keewatin Community Development Association / Boreal Heartland	1
KEYS Job Center	3
Kootenay Career Development Society	1
La Relance	1
Leads Employment Services	3
League of Innovators	2
Libre Emploi	1
Lutherwood	4
MAGMA	1
MAGNET	1
Magnet (Ryerson University)	3
MaRS Discovery District	1
MCG Careers	1
Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre	1
Mlle.	1
MRON	1
Ms.	1
Nanaimo Youth Services Association	1
National Capital Region YMCA-YWCA	1
Neil Squire	6
New Brunswick Multicultural Council Inc. Conseil multiculturel du Nouveau-Brunswick Inc.	1
New Leaf Enterprises	2
Newcomers Employment & Education Development Services (N.E.E.D.S.) Inc.	1
Next-Steps Employment Centres	1
North Island Employment	2
Nova Scotia Community College	2
Nova Scotia Works	3
OCISO	2
Ometz	1
oneROOF Youth Services	1
Ontario Disability Employment Network	1
Operation Come Home	1
Organization	1
Orillia Area Community Development Corporation	1

Orillia CDC	1
Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization	1
Parkland College	1
Phoenix Youth Programs	4
PICS	1
Prince Edward Learning Centre	2
Prince's Trust Canada	1
Prospect Human Services	2
PS jeunesse	1
R2 Employment Solutions	1
Ray of Hope	2
RCJEQ	1
Red Lake Career & Employment Services	1
Regina District industry Education Council	1
Regina Open Door Society	3
Regina Work Preparation Centre	1
Reseau des CJE du Québec	1
Saint Mary's University	2
SaskAbilities - Partners in Employment	1
Saskatchewan Polytechnic	1
Saskatchewan Youth in Care and Custody Network	1
Sault Community Career Centre	2
Sault Ste. Marie YMCA	1
SD38 Richmond School District	1
Secrétariat à la jeunesse	1
Shuswap Association for Community Living	2
Smallwood Crescent Community Centre	1
smu	1
SMUEC	1
Social Impact Advisors	1
Société de développement social (SDS)	1
Southeast Youth Employment Services	3
Spark Employment Services	1
Sprint emploi	1
SSL	1
St. Leonard's Community Services	1
St. Paul's University College @University of Waterloo	1
St. Stephen's Community House	1
Student Employment and Career Centre	1
TCET	1
TDSB	4
TeenWork	2
The Adventure Group	1
The Career Foundation	6
The Center for Education And Training	2
The City of Calgary Youth Employment Centre	3

The Family Centre	1
The Immigrant Education Society (TIES)	1
The Learning Enrichment Foundation	1
The Murphy Centre	1
The Neighbourhood Group	1
Thompson Community Services	2
Toronto Employment & Social Services	1
Toronto Public library	1
Tracks Employment and Resource Services of Georgian Bay Inc.	2
Trajectoire-emploi	1
Travail Sans Frontières	1
Trent University Durham	1
Triangle Community Resources Inc.	1
Tropicana	3
Univers Emploi	1
University of Manitoba	1
University of Regina	1
University of Saskatchewan	3
UPEI	1
Valley Community Learning Association	2
Various	1
VCCS Employment Services	2
VDACL	1
Vecova	1
VPI Working Solutions	2
WCG Work BC	1
WorkBC	2
WSNCC - Gateway	1
YES	1
Yes Employment Services	2
YMCA	34
Young Diplomats Of Canada	1
Youth Employment Centre City of Calgary	1
Youth Employment Readiness Program Durham Region	1
Youth Employment Services	1
Youth Opportunities Unlimited	1
Youth Programs Caledon Community	1



CANADIAN COUNCIL FOR
YOUTH PROSPERITY