

CYN YOUTH FRAMEWORK





A MESSAGE FROM THE **CYN CHAIR**

At its core, the Child and Youth Network (CYN) is dedicated to helping improve outcomes for children, youth, and families.

Innovation, research, and learnings have been critical to our work as we have moved forward on many fronts to make our shared vision "happy, healthy, children and youth today; caring, creative, responsible adults tomorrow" a reality. In the early days of the CYN a lot of this work focused on younger children and families.

In 2012, the CYN made an explicit commitment to work with young people and youth service providers to understand how to better engage and meet their needs. The initial result of our work is this document: the CYN Youth Framework. It is built on the foundation of evidence, our collective experiential learnings, and the vital input of our young people.

The purpose of this document is to provide a comprehensive and easy to understand framework that, when applied in a consistent manner across our community, will allow us "to collaboratively engage and support all young people to develop their skills and abilities to successfully navigate transitions in life and education, build meaningful relationships, and live healthy lifestyles."

This framework is for all CYN partners to use in our individual and collective work. It is intended to assist in the design and implementation of programs that engage young people in issues and solutions that matter to them and will ultimately result in improved outcomes.

Lynne Livingstone

CYN Chair

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The development of the CYN Youth Framework would not have been possible without the contribution, commitment, and enthusiasm of CYN member agencies. The CYN Youth Framework is reflective of knowledge, expertise, and recommendations shared by approximately 55 CYN members during a collaborative, co-creation process.

We would also like to thank the 40 young people, representing seven youth-led organizations, for their role in the development of the CYN Youth Framework. Their ideas informed, enhanced, and validated the core components of the framework.

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A SUMMARY OF THE **CYN YOUTH FRAMEWORK**

The CYN Youth Framework connects our work with what research, CYN partners, and young people say is important for their success.

Comprised of a goal statement, six guiding principles, five core components, and eighteen outcomes with corresponding success indicators, the CYN Youth Framework supports collective impact.

By aligning our work with the framework, we can maximize our collaborative efforts.

CYN YOUTH
FRAMEWORK

HOW THE FRAMEWORK CAN BE USED

The CYN Youth Framework serves as a guide for decision-making and planning. It provides a menu of outcomes and indicators that can be referenced in the design, implementation, and evaluation of activities, programs, and services that help young people thrive.

When developing a program for young people, the framework can be referenced to identify outcomes and design strategies that provide a foundation for maximum impact. The framework can also assist in identifying success indicators and metrics to support evaluation.

While specific activities, programs, and services may vary, the framework can be used to engage and support young people.

Ultimately, the framework will align our collaborative efforts to support “happy, healthy, children and youth today; caring, creative, responsible adults tomorrow.”

THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING THE FRAMEWORK

In 2013, the CYN engaged in the evaluation of three programs: Real Voice, Grade Seven and Eight Ending Poverty Demonstration Project and Dynamic Dozen. Further, two literature reviews were prepared including one focused on youth transitions and another focused on youth literacy programs.

An analysis of these research and evaluation documents demonstrated regardless of method of delivery, there was alignment in outcomes and impact. Common core elements and themes also emerged throughout these documents, including:

- Young people were the core focus and were involved in decision-making
- Collaboration among multiple partners and contribution from partners
- Integration of evaluation to inform process, direction, and decisions
- Commitment to innovation
- Inclusion of wraparound supports
- Relationships and networks were foundational
- Acknowledgement of risk and protective factors for enhanced impact

CYN Project Managers and City of London staff reviewed the aligned results and common themes and engaged in initial conversations focused on how the findings could support the collective work of CYN partners.

The desire to create a youth framework was the result of a commitment to focus on young people and was built on these initial project findings and conversations. The process outline below was adopted to support the development of the youth framework by involving CYN partners and young people.

STEP 1

Designing The Initial Framework Components

In December 2013, 15 young people, CYN partners, CYN Project Managers, and City of London staff came together to design the initial components of the youth framework. Source documents combined with the collective experience of the group informed the development a goal statement, guiding principles, themes, outcomes, and success indicators for the youth framework. After the session, the content was analyzed and mapped against research and evaluation results to further develop the components of the framework.

The framework was presented during a second session to gather additional feedback. Key activities guided this process to generate recommendations, revisions, and suggestions. Results from the brainstorming session were then integrated into the framework.

STEP 2

Building The Framework With CYN Partners and Young People

A community consultation was held in which 55 CYN partners reviewed the framework and provided insights, recommendations, and revisions. CYN partners discussed opportunities where the framework could be used and identified training and resource needs for implementation.

A focus group was also held with 40 young people. During this focus group, the framework was discussed and recommendations were provided to further enhance and align the framework with what is important to young people.

Results from both consultations were integrated into the framework.

STEP 3

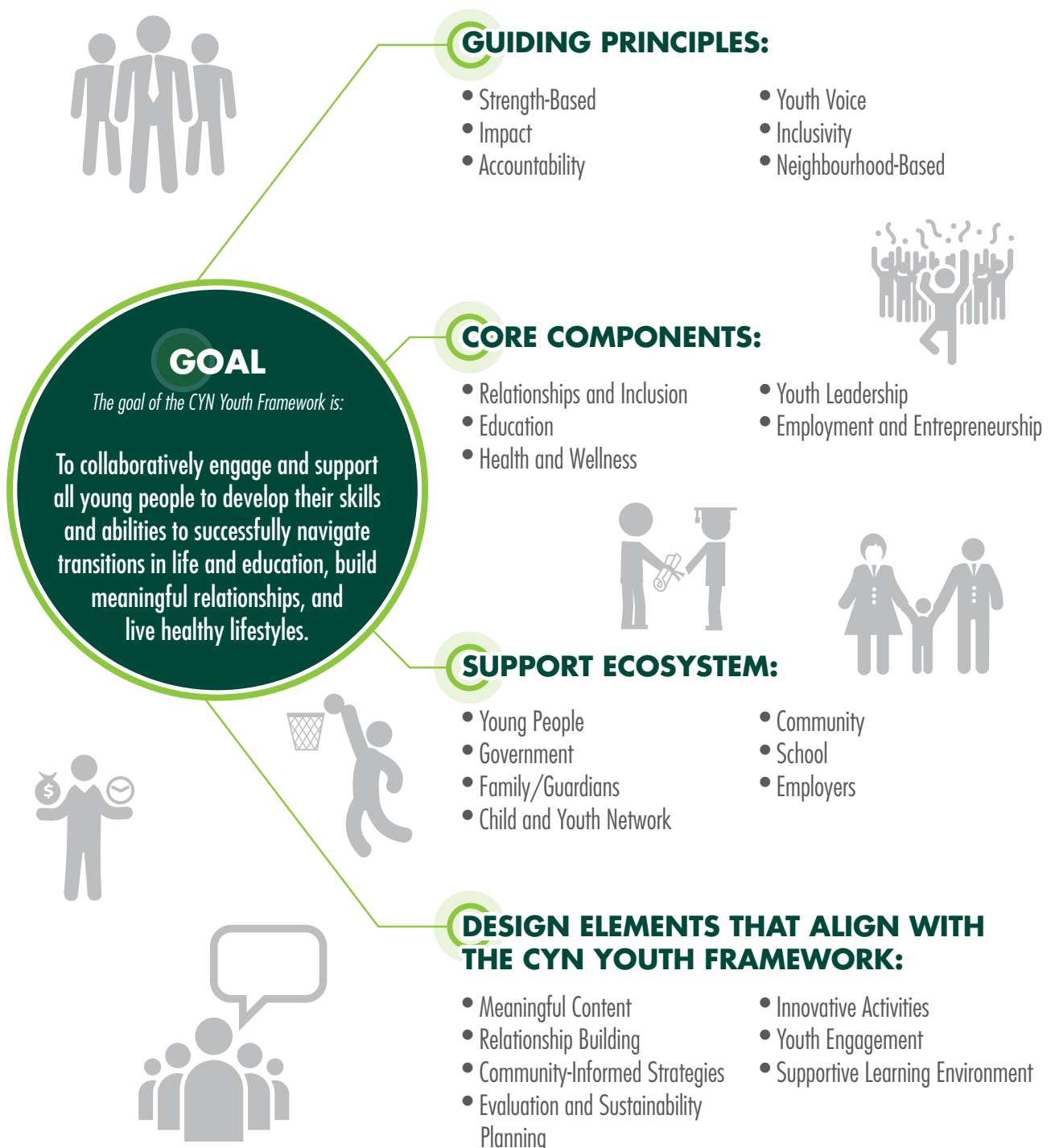
Validating The Framework

To validate the framework, research was conducted to identify other youth frameworks. In total, eight youth frameworks were reviewed and compared with the content of the CYN Youth Framework. One of the most relevant and useful frameworks used to validate the CYN Youth Framework was *Stepping Up: A Strategic Framework to Help Ontario's Youth Succeed* (Ministry of Children and Youth Services, 2013). While this framework has provincial focus, in comparison the CYN Youth Framework's local focus, the content aligned closely demonstrating the collaborative process of designing and building the CYN Youth Framework resulted in a valid framework for working with young people.

To further validate the framework, 18 CYN partners were invited to review the framework and provide feedback. Again, revisions were incorporated to finalize the framework.

The current framework, presented in this document, represents the results of the CYN research and evaluations, as well as the collective experiences and wisdom of young people and CYN partners.

THE CYN YOUTH FRAMEWORK



GOAL

The goal of the CYN Youth Framework is:

To collaboratively engage and support all young people to develop their skills and abilities to successfully navigate transitions in life and education, build meaningful relationships, and live healthy lifestyles.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The CYN Youth Framework has six Guiding Principles, including:

- 1 Strength-Based:** A strength-based approach is grounded in the belief that young people have existing competencies, are capable of learning new skills and solving problems, and can use existing competencies to identify and address their own concerns (Alliance for Children and Youth, n.d). A strength-based approach also gives consideration to protective factors which allow a person to develop and promote self-determination and increase participation (Hammond, 2010).
- 2 Youth Voice:** A focus on youth voice emphasizes the capacity and intentionality of all young people to be engaged in meaningful participation. Including the perspectives, ideas, experiences, knowledge, and actions of young people is inherent in this idea.
- 3 Impact:** Impact as a principle denotes the importance of focusing on the development of young people in which support is provided to build their competence, skills, attributes, and connections.
- 4 Inclusivity:** Being inclusive ensures all young people are included, diversity is celebrated within and across communities, and young people are provided the space to have a voice and identify as they wish. This also refers to ensuring young people influence programs, barriers to participation are removed, and protective factors are increased.
- 5 Accountability:** Accountability is demonstrated through regular evaluation of practice, the continuation of program development, and implementation based on best-practice research.
- 6 Neighbourhood-Based:** Where people live has a tremendous influence on their outcomes in life. Neighbourhood focus promotes inclusion and builds strong networks.

CORE COMPONENTS

Relationships and Inclusion

Research demonstrates the importance of relationships and inclusion in the development of young people (United Way of Calgary and Alberta, 2013). This is supported by providing access to a network of relationships, encouragement, and motivational support from connections with adults, peers, family members, employers, and communities.

OUTCOMES

SUCCESS INDICATORS

Young people have a network of healthy relationships in their communities and/or neighbourhoods

- Young people have relationships that make them feel safe and happy
- Young people have positive relationships with peers, adults, family members, and employers
- Young people have mentors
- Young people are connected to supports and networks that help them achieve success

Young people access and use their relationships and resources to achieve success

- Young people collaborate with others in their community
- Young people achieve their goals as a result of leveraging their relationships

Young people experience social inclusion and value diversity in their community

- Young people have knowledge of their neighbourhood and community
- Young people are engaged in their community
- Young people feel socially included
- Young people feel a sense of belonging in their community
- Young people understand, celebrate, and promote diversity
- Young people are involved with diverse communities
- Young people feel safe in their community

Youth Leadership

Youth leadership explores the outcomes of providing young people with opportunities to build the capacity of their leadership skills and abilities. Young people who are involved in leadership roles often have a higher self-esteem and grades and are more physically active and committed to their friends, families, and communities.

OUTCOMES

SUCCESS INDICATORS

Young people have the leadership skills that provide them with the capacity to be engaged, productive members of their communities

- Young people can define leadership for themselves
- Young people take on leadership roles within the community
- Young people have leadership skills
- Young people participate in decision-making that affects them
- Young people are self-aware

Young people are involved in their community and participate in creating solutions

- Young people volunteer and contribute their skills to the community
- Young people are members of committees or boards
- Young people create, lead, and implement community solutions
- Young people are involved in improving their neighbourhood and/or community

Young people are resilient and resourceful in finding their own solutions

- Young people have the confidence to advocate for themselves
- Young people share their opinions and play a role in informing decisions
- Young people have the capacity to adapt in the presence of risk or adversity

OUTCOMES

SUCCESS INDICATORS

Young people
experience meaning
in leadership
opportunities

- Young people are involved in their community
- Young people participate in leadership opportunities

Community
organizations and
adults have created
opportunities for
young people

- Community organizations and adults support and embrace the solutions of young people
- Community organizations and adults provide meaningful opportunities for young people

Education

When young people have an education, they are more likely to secure employment, succeed in the workplace, and become community leaders (Ministry of Children and Youth Services, 2013). It is estimated that 70% of all new jobs created in the future will require post-secondary education (Rae, 2005). Providing young people with educational opportunities will support successful educational transitions, promote skill development, and encourage lifelong learning.

OUTCOMES

SUCCESS INDICATORS

Young people access meaningful learning, training, and skill development opportunities

- Young people have awareness of career paths
- Young people have exposure and access to diverse learning, training, and skill development
- Young people have a plan for their education
- Young people are engaged in their education

Young people experience successful educational transitions

- Young people graduate from high school with their cohort
- Young people graduate from college or university
- Young people complete an apprenticeship or co-op
- Young people feel prepared for high school, post-secondary, and employment
- Young people make a successful transition from education to the workforce

Young people have educational experiences that promote skill development and lifelong learning

- Young people have the resources and support to foster educational achievement
- Young people have learning opportunities that align with, and create awareness of, personal interests
- Young people can define the value of education

Employment and Entrepreneurship

Despite staying in school longer than any other generation, Canadian youth continue to have higher unemployment rates in comparison to the adult population and take longer to make the school-to-work transition than ever before (Bell and O'Reilly, 2008). Providing resources and support to foster engagement and skill building as it relates to employment and entrepreneurship has been shown to lead to successful career development.

OUTCOMES

SUCCESS INDICATORS

Young people have relevant experiences, tools, and resources to facilitate entry into employment or business

- Young people are engaged in meaningful opportunities to gain practical career and education skills
- Young people have employability skills
- Young people have resources and relationships to facilitate entry into employment or self-employment
- Young people have careers that fit with the needs of the market
- Young people have exposure to employment or self-employment opportunities

Young people have opportunities for meaningful employment

- Young people have economic independence
- Young people secure their first quality employment experience
- Young people are employed or self-employed

OUTCOMES

SUCCESS INDICATORS

Young people have the skills to build a successful career

- Young people have skills for employment or self-employment
- Young people are satisfied in their careers
- Young people start businesses
- Young people lead successful businesses
- Young people have defined career paths

Young people have jobs related to their training and education

- Young people have jobs based on training
- Young people are satisfied with their training
- Young people are satisfied with their employment

Health and Wellness

Health and wellness encompasses both the mental and emotional aspects of well-being (Health Canada, 2013). Healthy physical, cognitive, and emotional well-being provides young people with the competency and confidence to achieve their full potential.

OUTCOMES

SUCCESS INDICATORS

Young people are physically, cognitively, and emotionally healthy

- Young people are physically active
- Young people make healthy lifestyle choices
- Young people have life skills
- Young people are resilient in the face of challenges and change
- Young people have food literacy skills
- Young people have access to healthy food
- Young people engage in healthy activities

Young people have the competency and confidence to participate in healthy physical activity

- Young people have the skills to make healthy choices
- Young people participate in physical activity
- Young people connect to resources that promote healthy activity

Young people are aware of and understand how to make choices that support healthy lifestyles

- Young people have knowledge of, and access to, health and health-related resources
- Young people participate in activities that promote healthy living
- Young people engage in behaviours that support healthy lifestyles

SUPPORT ECOSYSTEM

While young people can and do shape their own future, their success is influenced by a broader ecosystem, including:

Young People: Youth involvement is essential. In designing programming to support young people, it is critical that young people are directly involved. Delivering programs and supports that are youth driven and encouraging young people to take an active role in their development are best-practices.

Community: The communities in which young people live greatly influence outcomes for young people. Communities provide opportunities for growth, development, connection, and engagement. Community refers to both organizations and individuals, as well as formal and informal supports. The community can mediate risk factors and encourage healthy development. Coordination and collaboration is integral to serve the varied and unique needs of young people. Community includes, but is not limited to: foundations and philanthropic organizations, faith-based and cultural groups, sports clubs, arts-based groups, mentors, other community associations, and the private sector.

Government: The federal, provincial, and municipal governments provide many services that affect the daily lives of young people such as education and health services.

School: Primary, secondary, and post-secondary institutions play a significant role in the lives of young people. Young people spend their most formative years in educational institutions. Successful transitions from primary to secondary, secondary to post-secondary, and post-secondary to work are critical to the success of young people.

Family/Guardians: Parental and family supports provide the foundation of social support, caring relationships, and consistent bonds which act as significant protective factors. Research demonstrates parental and family involvement during youth development, especially during key transitions, is associated with positive outcomes overall. Ensuring parents are aware, supportive, and engaged are important considerations when developing programs and activities.

Employers: Employers provide opportunities for development and skill building through employment and training.

Child and Youth Network: The CYN acts as the connector that brings all groups together to engage in meaningful dialogue, learning, and application of best-practices.

DESIGN ELEMENTS THAT ALIGN WITH THE CYN YOUTH FRAMEWORK

The following design elements encourage innovation and root the design of programs and services for young people in research and best-practices as informed by CYN partners, young people, and research and evaluations.

Meaningful Content: Meaningful content refers to ensuring the content is relevant and important to young people. The content should also be relevant to the developmental stage of the youth (i.e., early or late adolescence). Likewise, consideration should be given to barriers such as gender, socioeconomic status, conflict with law, out-of-school youth, etc. when developing meaningful content.

Innovative Activities: Innovative activities refers to the utilization of framing programming through unique elements such as art and technology. Providing innovative activities occurs by tapping into the interests of young people to motivate and engage them in participation.

Relationship Building: Relationship building refers to social interaction with peers as well as relationship development with community organizations, mentors, and other adults who can support young people. Research demonstrates including an element of relationship building is important to augment the efficacy of many other strategies for improving youth outcomes.

Youth Engagement: Youth engagement refers to incorporating participatory approaches to program development and implementation. Research demonstrates engaged participants are usually motivated and, as a result, enjoy programs and are more likely to continue. Elements to consider include providing choice, opportunities for capacity building and leadership, encouraging self-reflection, development of social awareness, and incorporation of art and technology.

Community-Informed Strategies: Community-informed refers to the use of strategies that have been identified through participatory engagement of young people and community members. Creating programs based on needs of the community, in addition to elements found in evidence-based practice, is essential in ensuring programs remain relevant and impactful for young people.

Supportive Learning Environment: A supportive learning environment refers to both the physical learning space and the creation of a social environment that supports learning. This includes the development of youth-centered programs based on social interaction, choice, and voice. In doing so, programs should assess and build on the young persons context, perceptions, and use of literacy and language. Additionally, programs should build on the young persons prior knowledge, language, vocabulary and experiences, and focus on themes and content that are meaningful and build a strong sense of identity as part of the community (Literacy Gains, 2012).

Evaluation and Sustainability Planning: Evaluation and sustainability planning refers to measuring the impact and effectiveness of the program and leveraging results to build long-term sustainability. Evaluation of programs is an ongoing process and should be incorporated into all programs to refine and ensure the needs of young people are met. It is important to ensure evaluation tools are made available for programs to make this process easy and accessible. Sustainability planning is important when developing youth programs as well to ensure success for long-term, sustained commitment to healthy youth development.

NEXT STEPS

Pending endorsement by the CYN, possible next steps include:

- 1 CYN Priority Areas will implement the CYN Youth Framework with all initiatives and activities that engage young people. Through this process, supports and resources required to implement the CYN Youth Framework will be identified. The framework will be revised based on the learnings from the implementation process.
- 2 Tools and resources will be created to support the implementation of the CYN Youth Framework. This could include, but is not limited to, common measurement and reporting tools, an implementation toolkit, training on how to use the framework, an interactive website to support program design, and evaluation.
- 3 The CYN Youth Framework will be promoted to encourage all individuals and organizations working with young people in London to integrate the framework into their work. The tools, resources, and training developed will strengthen uptake and integration.
- 4 An ever-evolving piece of work, the CYN Youth Framework will undergo an evaluation. Results from the evaluation will be used to revise and refine the framework.

The work of CYN partners results in individual, community, and system level impact. The CYN Youth Framework complements the work in our community and supports successful outcomes for young people.

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