



Let's Talk Program for Newcomer Youth Evaluation Report 2018-2021



The Let's Talk Program at the KW Multicultural Centre was funded (2018-2021)
by the Ontario Trillium Foundation's Local Poverty Reduction Program.

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
INTRODUCTION	5
Context: Newcomer Youth Need Upstream Poverty Interventions	5
Intervention: Let's Talk Program Grows Education and Career Goals	5
Let's Talk Intervention Overview	5
EVALUATION GOALS	7
Overall Evaluation Questions	7
Specific Let's Talk Program Outcome Goals	7
EVALUATION METHODS	8
Mixed Methods Outcome Evaluation Approach	8
Program Changes Due to COVID	9
Indicators	10
Process Evaluation	10
EVALUATION RESULTS	12
Participant Sample and Demographics	12
Outcome Evaluation Findings: Positive Changes for Participants	15
Process Evaluation: What We Learned About Program Delivery	22
CONCLUSIONS	27
Main Conclusions	27
Strengths and Limitations of This Report	28
Recommendations	28
Next Steps	28
APPENDICES	29
Appendix A: Let's Talk Core Curriculum and Additional Initiatives	30
Appendix B: Let's Talk Logic Model	31
Appendix C: Survey and Focus Group Questions	32
Appendix D: Frequency Analysis Details	35
Appendix E: References	36

Analysis and report by:
Anne Bergen, PhD, and Lisa McMurtry, PhD, **Knowledge to Action** Consulting Inc.



Executive Summary

The Let's Talk project provided tailored supports for education and career goals for newcomer youth in Kitchener-Waterloo. This strength-based program was designed to build on youth assets and interests, and promote mental health, wellbeing, and youth-community connections.

Specifically, The *Let's Talk* program, hosted by the KW Multicultural Centre, was designed to facilitate education and career development by focusing on school readiness and future success:

- Providing safe space to explore career aspirations, connections with resources to achieve goals, and
- Facilitating interpersonal relationships, community engagement, and youth empowerment

The program offered a semi-structured 8-week curriculum, with each workshop focused on a different topic including: goal setting, navigating the education system, career counseling, etc. The program provided connections and mentorship from community partner on diverse career and education paths. Program content and opportunities were shaped by youth interests.

The overall project goal was to improve employment and education knowledge and outcomes and enhance interpersonal connections for newcomer youth.

Our key **outcome evaluation** question, linked to our logic model, asks: "To what extent did Let's Talk achieve its short- and medium-term outcomes?"

We also used **process evaluation** to investigate: "Is Let's Talk delivering programming in an effective and engaging way?"

Our evaluation used both quantitative and qualitative evaluation data, collected from program participants (at program start and end), as well as youth facilitators, community mentors, and program staff.

Let's Talk participants ranged in age from 13-21 (most between 14 and 20, average age 16 years). Slightly more than half of participants were female (57%). Most participants had been in Canada for two years or less (61%). Most participants were permanent residents (71%) and about 10% were refugees or protected persons.

Let's Talk reached participants from 46 different countries of origin. Top countries of origin were Eritrea, Syria, Somalia, and Turkey, together accounting for 51% of participants.

Let's Talk participants spoke 41 different languages. An important part of the program was finding ways to communicate and involve youth with a range of English language learner skills.

Overall, the evaluation findings show that Let's Talk is achieving its short- and medium-term outcome goals. This is based on findings from the participant survey, focus groups, and facilitator observations.

Specifically, the evaluation found that participants are achieving the intended outcomes for the Let's Talk program:

- Increased awareness of and knowledge about the Canadian education system
- Helpful education and career guidance
- Improved interpersonal connections
- Improved sense of belonging and community connection
- Personal development of newcomer youth
- Knowing how to achieve their goals
- Being connected to help and resources

Key themes in the open-ended question “what was the biggest change for you as a result of the program” related to understanding of education and career goals and how to achieve them, connections with others and the local community, and self-confidence and wellbeing.

Similar to self-report from participants, qualitative outcome findings from facilitator, community partner, and staff provided additional supportive data. Youth facilitators described learning, sharing, and connecting through their leadership role in the program. Community partners described youth gaining confidence, connections, and a reciprocal benefit. Program staff described growth in youth communication, aspirations, and inclusion.

Process takeaways from facilitator, community partner, and staff focus, as well as program participants, show Let's Talk, overall, delivered programming in an engaging and effective way. Youth facilitators explained youth-centred activities and direct benefits promoted engagement. Community partners noted how responsive programming works best in person in small groups. Program staff described need for dedicated resources and how partnerships enrich programming.

Conclusions are that **Let's Talk achieved desired outcomes for participants and Let's Talk's delivered programming in an effective and engaging way.**

Recommendations are for similar future programs to:

- Ensure minimal barriers to participation (transportation, intake forms, etc.)
- Create more opportunities for past participants to remain involved/supported and to continue to connect with community resources and opportunities
- Continue to work toward creating an interactive online environment, recognizing the barriers
- Enhance staffing capacity and resources to reduce the waitlist and improve accessibility (e.g., multiple locations, broader age range)
- Recognize and work to minimize the burdens placed on program staff to responsively meet the needs of participants

Organizations and policymakers looking to fund similar initiatives should recognize the benefits of strengths-based tailored supports for helping newcomer youth to gain capacity, connections, and confidence to pursue their career and education goals.

Next steps are sharing the findings and promising practices detailed in this evaluation report in order access other funding to support newcomer youth. Findings will also be shared to inform and improve career and employment supports offered through the KW Multicultural Centre.



Introduction

Context: Newcomer Youth Need Upstream Poverty Interventions

Newcomer youth are a vulnerable population, with inter-related and compounding risk factors for poverty. These risks are compounded by diverse pre- and post-migratory experiences, as well as ongoing stresses faced by adolescents in school.

At the same time, newcomer youth have many strengths and assets. Migration and settlement require newcomer youth to be adaptable, flexible, and resilient.

In the Kitchener-Waterloo (KW) area, there was an identified need for strengths-based programming to support newcomer youth and promote economic wellbeing. While many newcomer youth have strong educational and career aspirations, local systems are ineffective in supporting their goals.

In particular, both newcomer youth and community partners saw a need for tailored supports for education and career goals, in a way that built on youth assets and interests, and promoted mental health, wellbeing, and youth-community connections.

Intervention: Let's Talk Program Grows Education and Career Goals

The Let's Talk program is an innovative upstream poverty reduction intervention designed by the KW Multicultural Centre to address numerous risk factors, so newcomer youth gain the confidence, wellbeing, and opportunity to achieve their education and career goals.

The Let's Talk program employs a two-pronged approach to support newcomer youth in their economic and overall wellbeing:

- 1) Workshops provide a safe space for newcomer youth to explore their academic and career aspirations and to connect them with resources to help achieve these goals, and
- 2) Through artful facilitation, Let's Talk enables development of interpersonal relationships, community engagement, and youth empowerment.

Let's Talk Intervention Overview

Funding and program

KW Multicultural services received a Local Poverty Reduction Fund grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation to fund the Let's Talk intervention and evaluation.

This report details findings from process and outcome evaluation of the Let's Talk program from 2018-2021.

Theory of change for Let's Talk

- Newcomer youth have multiple intersecting risks to their economic wellbeing:
 - Newcomer youth, who have not yet entered the job market, still experience barriers to achieving their education and career aspirations.
 - The KW region has gaps in educational and career guidance and supports for newcomer youth, as well as mental health programming and system navigation
- The *Let's Talk* program, hosted by the KW Multicultural Centre, facilitates education and career development by focusing on school readiness and future success:
 - Providing safe space to explore career aspirations, connections with resources to achieve goals, and
 - Facilitating interpersonal relationships, community engagement, and youth empowerment
- Let's Talk's weekly workshop (8 sessions) are designed to provide knowledge tailored to specific needs and preferences of newcomer youth:
 - Semi-structured curriculum, with each workshop focused on a different topic including goal setting, navigating the education system, career counseling, etc. See curriculum details in Appendix A.
 - The first and second workshops provide opportunity for participants to begin to express their specific needs. Subsequent workshops are tailored to address youth needs and preferences.
- Let's Talk anticipates that if newcomer youth are meaningfully engaged within the community, this will assist them with planning and achieving their goals through improved access to resources, mentorship, and community services:
 - Community partner mentorship diversity aimed at providing cultural similarity for participants
 - Building meaningful engagement with the community to support individual goal attainment and reduce poverty

Target populations

The target population for this intervention are youth (age 14-20¹) who are newcomers to Canada and live in the KW region. Youth completing and exiting secondary school are a key audience, as well as youth earlier in their education pathway.

Program governance

During the initial years of the program, the design was informed by a community partner advisory group and a youth advisory group.

¹ Of note, youth demand was slightly older than anticipated, resulting in an upper age cap of 20 rather than 17. Similarly, a few youth aged 13 have participated so they could be in a cohort with their peers.



Evaluation Goals

Overall Evaluation Questions

The research question guiding the **outcome evaluation** is linked to the logic model and asks: “To what extent did Let’s Talk achieve its short- and medium-term outcomes?”.

The research question guiding the **process evaluation** is: “Is Let’s Talk delivering programming in an effective and engaging way?”.

See logic model details in Appendix B.

Specific Let’s Talk Program Outcome Goals

Short-term outcomes goals:

The short-term outcomes we expected to see during the program terms were:

- Newcomer youth have increased awareness of and knowledge about the Canadian education system
- Newcomer youth receive meaningful education and career guidance
- Newcomer youth build and strengthen interpersonal connections
- Workshops help to mitigate culture shock and improve newcomer youth’s sense of belonging

Intermediate-term outcomes goals:

The intermediate-term outcomes we expected to see during the program term were:

- Personal development of newcomer youth
- Newcomer youth are connected to resources and workshop mentors to help them achieve their goals

Long-term outcomes:

We did not expect to see long-term outcomes emerge during the program period. However, the long-term outcomes we expect for program participants, linked to Poverty Reduction Strategy indicators, were:

- Improved high school graduation rates
- Reduction in Youth not in education, employment or training (NEET)



Evaluation Methods

Mixed Methods Outcome Evaluation Approach

The **outcome evaluation** looks at how participants are achieving short and medium-term outcome goals, from the perspective of facilitators, participants, and community partners.

The overall methodology is triangulation among findings from these three data sources, with a longitudinal focus on what changes over time, in order to build a “contribution story”.

Note on evaluation design and contribution analysis

A control group methodology is not appropriate for the KWMC Let’s Talk program.

Instead, to strengthen the attribution of outcomes to intervention, this evaluation draws from contribution analysis methods. Contribution analysis is a way of demonstrating (inferring) cause and effect relationships in complex, real-life situations (Mayne, 2008; 2012).

Designed for cases where experimental methods are impossible or impractical, contribution analysis is a way of building a credible case about the causal contribution(s) of a program to observed outcomes and results (Mayne, 2008; 2012).

This included analysis of participant feedback from different sessions, pre/post participant survey data, and community partner focus groups.

The quantitative comparisons followed best practices, including reporting effect sizes.

Qualitative methods and analysis

Facilitator observation of youth group progress

Facilitators collected observations on group progress during the program. We collated the findings from these observation forms and use them to guide the design of the end of program focus groups. See Appendix C for observation template.

Youth facilitator focus groups

We conducted one focus group and one interview with a total of four youth facilitators, all of whom were program participants in 2019 and later became volunteer facilitators in 2019/2020 sessions of the program.

Community mentor/partner focus groups

Let’s Talk was developed collaboratively with a steering committee as well as with numerous community partners who provide services to our target population.

At the end of the program period, we conducted one focus group, one interview (and collected one testimonial) from community partners/mentors who have been involved to varying degrees in Let’s Talk program delivery. These are individuals who work for other community agencies. They speak with the youth about the services their organizations offer, and relay to them information about their profession. Some also lead activities with the youth (such as a library

scavenger hunt). Community mentors tend to reflect the cultural diversity of the youth participants. Those we spoke with represent the following agencies:

- Kitchener Public Library
- Kitchener Waterloo Art Gallery
- Sanctuary Refugee Health Centre
- Volunteer Action Centre Waterloo Region
- Waterloo Regional District School Board
- YMCA Newcomer Programs

The focus groups asked community partners/mentors what changes they are seeing among youth and in their programs because of the Let's Talk program. In addition, the focus groups looked for evidence of community connections and service use among program participants.

Program staff interview and focus group

We conducted an interview with the Let's Talk Program Coordinator and a focus group with members of the Kitchener Waterloo Multicultural Centre, who play a variety of supporting roles in the program. Informants included:

- Let's Talk Program Coordinator since 2017 (interviewed)
- Let's Talk Co-Facilitator (past)
- 2 Staff from Employment Services
- Staff who provides emotional support to youth, translation
- 2 Co-op placement students (current and past)
- Employment Program and Special Program Manager
- Settlement Programs Manager
- Operations Manager

Quantitative methods and analysis

Participant pre-post outcome survey

A survey was completed by participants at the beginning and at the end of each Let's Talk session (i.e., pre-test (week 1)/ post-test (week 8)) based on the program's short and medium-term outcomes. See surveys in Appendix C.

The first survey, administered during week 1, provided baseline data and gave participants the opportunity to better understand their current knowledge, skills, and attitudes about education and employment. The same survey was then be given at the end of the session (i.e., week 8). Findings from this survey were compared to pre-test data to determine the impact of Let's Talk as related to achieving the program's short and medium-term outcomes.

The survey allowed participants to explicitly see aspects of their learning process and how the workshops contributed to their personal development. The tools were designed to be brief and easy to understand for different language levels. These tools were pilot tested during the first session and revised based on participant feedback.

All forms were designed as hardcopy paper versions. By the end of the program, intake and evaluation forms were digitally hosted. Switching to online consent and intake forms assisted with increasing uptake and reducing the amount of paperwork to be completed during the first session. Online forms also enabled data collection during COVID restrictions.

Program Changes Due to COVID

During the winter 2020 session, the COVID-19 pandemic made it necessary for the Let's Talk program to move online. The final two sessions were held online for this cohort.

The program was adapted for an online format in spring and summer 2020. This included a shorter 6-week session involved more youth (since demand was very high and time limited), and identifying strategies for online engagement and participation, including breakout rooms and online poll or quiz tools.

The participant outcome survey moved online mid-program during spring 2020 (due to COVID).

Indicators

An overview of outcomes and indicators is provided below in Table 1.

Table 1. Let's Talk outcome goals and indicators.

Outcome goal	Indicator
Short-term outcomes	
Newcomer youth have increased awareness of and knowledge about the Canadian education system	Participant pre-post survey and weekly feedback Number of youth attending workshops; Facilitator ratings/observation
Newcomer youth receive meaningful education and career guidance	Participant pre-post survey and weekly feedback
Newcomer youth build and strengthen interpersonal connections	Participant pre-post survey and weekly feedback Number of mentors/advisers connected with program Facilitator focus groups and observation
Workshops help to improve newcomer youth's sense of belonging and community connection	Participant pre-post survey and weekly feedback
Medium-term outcomes	
Personal development of newcomer youth	Participant pre-post survey and weekly feedback Facilitator focus groups and observation
Newcomer youth are connected to resources and workshop mentors to help them achieve their goals	Number of youth accessing community services Participant pre-post survey and weekly feedback Facilitator focus groups and observation Interviews with community partners
Long-term outcomes	
Community services are reoriented to address the needs and assets of newcomer youth	Not measured directly in this program. However, client survey feedback, interviews with community partners; facilitator focus groups may speak to these outcomes.
Newcomer youth empowerment	
Newcomer youth are meaningfully engaged with their community	

Process Evaluation

The process evaluation looked at what is working and not working from the perspective of facilitators and participants. Findings were collated throughout the program as recommendations for subsequent workshop re-development and improvement.

The research question guiding the process evaluation is: "Is Let's Talk delivering programming in an effective and engaging way?"

Participant and facilitator feedback on workshop quality was collected weekly using brief tools (see Appendix C). The tools were designed to be brief and easy to understand for different language levels. These tools were pilot tested during the first session and revised based on participant feedback.

Facilitator feedback

The evaluation formalized the organic conversations that occur between facilitators after the end of a workshop. Because workshops are one-week apart, it can be difficult to recall all experiences that can contribute to evaluation. At the same time, requiring facilitators to complete long reflective evaluation tools on a weekly basis can be too cumbersome and resultantly ineffective.

Therefore, this program uses a simple “Continue, Start, Stop” survey at the end of each session for staff facilitators to complete (see Appendix C).

Participant feedback

A “start, stop, continue” for participants was provided at the program mid-point and end-point (based on session one feedback that weekly assessment was too frequent).



Evaluation Results

Participant Sample and Demographics

Current sample

Overall, there were 220 youth enrolled in the Let's Talk program. Of these, 219 completed the evaluation pre-test survey and 142 completed the post-program survey.

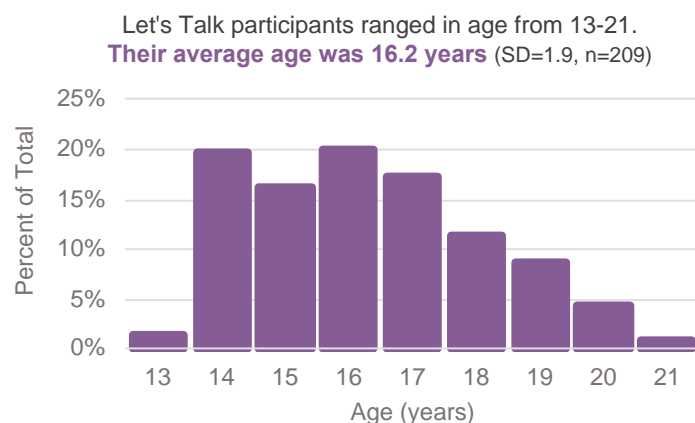
While our original intended sample size was 90 (6 sessions over 3 years), as the program progressed, we learned that sessions should be over-subscribed at the start to account for attrition. In 2020, the program moved online in response to COVID-19. This allowed us to increase our enrolment for online sessions and offer two sessions during spring/summer 2020.

Demographics

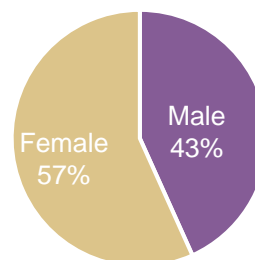
Let's Talk participants were mainly between 14 and 20. The average age of participants was 16 years. A few participants who were older or younger siblings of other participants participated aged 13 or 21.

Overall, this program reached its target population of youth near the end of their secondary school education. The program also reached some younger secondary school students, who were interested in education and career development.

The gender balance of the program was close to an even split, with slightly more female participants.

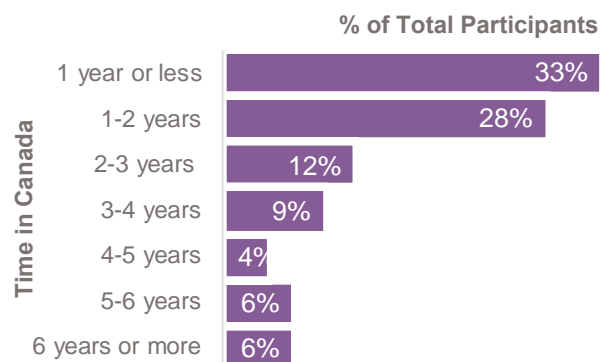


Let's Talk participants were about half male and half female, with slightly more female participants. (n=215)

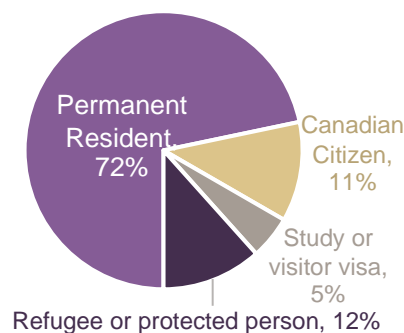


As planned, most participants were newcomers to Canada. More than half of participants had been in the country two years or less. Almost all had been in the country under 6 years. Almost three-quarters of participants were permanent residents, and about 1 in 10 were refugees.

Most participants (61%) had been in Canada for two years or less (n=186, M= 2.6, SD=2.6).



Most participants (71%) were permanent residents. About 1 in 10 were refugees or protected persons. (n=200)



Let's Talk reached participants from 46 different countries of origin. Fewer than 5% of participants had Canada as a country of origin. As shown in the table below, top countries of origin were Eritrea, Syria, Somalia, and Turkey, together accounting for 51% of participants.

Table 2. Top countries of origin for Let's Talk participants.

Country of origin	Number of participants	Percentage
Eritrea	49	24%
Syria	29	14%
Somalia	15	7%
Turkey	13	6%
Iraq	11	5%
Canada	9	4%
Sudan	6	3%
Ethiopia	5	2%

Other countries of origin (less than 5 participants from each) were:

Afghanistan	Kazakhstan	Pakistan
Burundi	Kenya	Philippines
Colombia	Korea	Saudi Arabia
Congo	Kurdistan	South Korea
Cuba	Kurdistan/Iraq	Syria
Dominican Republic	Laos	Taiwan
Egypt	Malaysia	Uganda
France	Mauritius	UAE
Germany	Mexico	USA
India	Morocco	Vietnam
Iran	Myanmar	Zambia
Ivory Coast	Nepal	
Jamaica	Nigeria	

Let's Talk participants spoke 41 different languages. Many participants spoke more than one language, but English was not always one of those languages. As shown in the table below, top languages were Arabic, Tigrinya(ia), Turkish, and Somali, accounting for 37% of participants.

An important part of the program was finding ways to communicate and involve youth with a range of English language learner skills.

Table 3. Top languages spoken by Let's Talk participants. (n=24)

Language spoken	Number of participants	Percentage
Arabic	67	33%
English	72	35%
Tigrinya	43	21%
Turkish	23	11%
Somali	16	8%
Spanish	9	4%
Kurdish	7	3%
Amharic	8	4%
French	9	4%
Swahili (Kiswahili)	6	3%
Korean	5	2%

Other languages spoken (less than 5 participants reporting each) was:

Bilen	Hmong	Russian
Bosnian	Japanese	Saho
Burmese	Kinyamurenge	Serbian
Cantonese	Kirundi	Sombalibantu
Chinese	Laos	Tagalog (Filipino)
Dari (Afghan Persian)	Malay	Telugu
French Creole	Mandarin	Thai
Gujarati	Nepali	Urdu
Hebrew	Persian	Vietnamese
Hindi	Punjabi	Yoruba

Outcome Evaluation Findings: Positive Changes for Participants

Overall, the evaluation findings show that Let's Talk is achieving its short- and medium-term outcome goals. This is based on findings from the participant survey, focus groups, and facilitator observations.

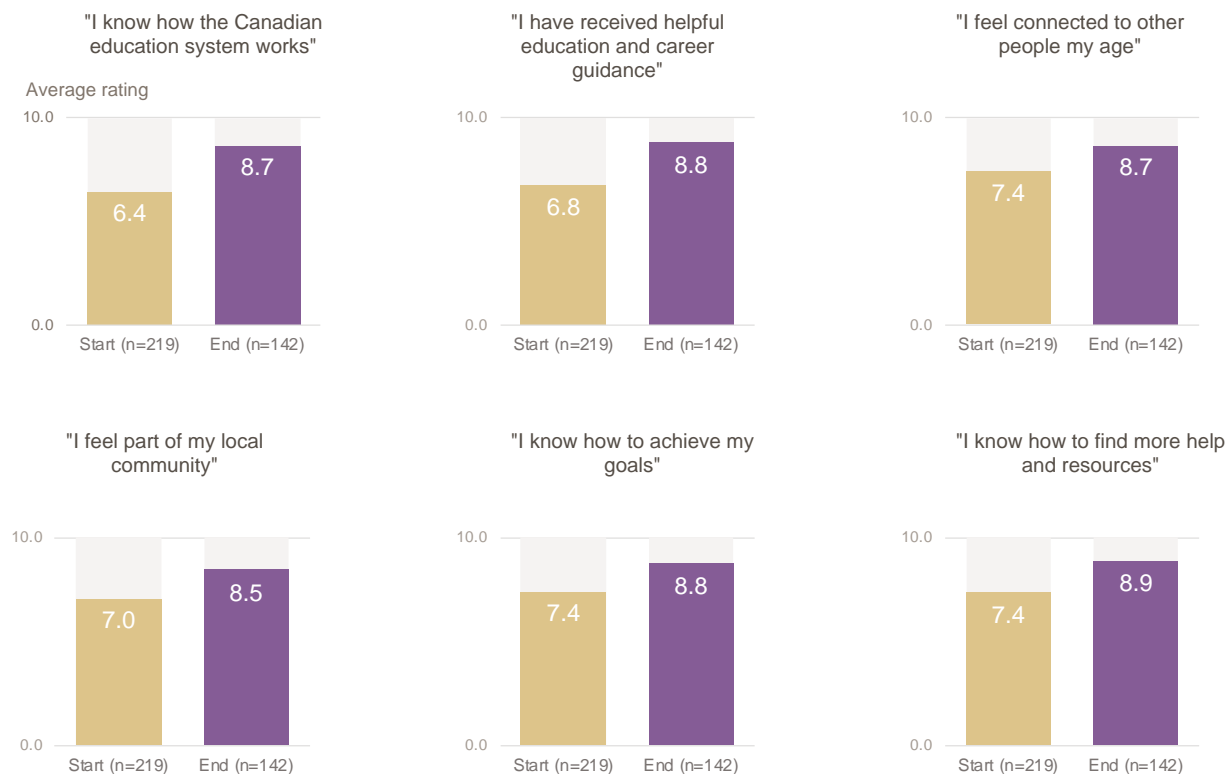
Quantitative outcome findings from participant survey

Based on the pre-post participant survey, participants are achieving the intended outcomes for the Let's Talk program:

- Increased awareness of and knowledge about the Canadian education system
- Helpful education and career guidance
- Improved interpersonal connections
- Improved sense of belonging and community connection
- Personal development of newcomer youth
- Knowing how to achieve their goals
- Being connected to help and resources

We examined change scores through several means, including visualization of averages, statistical pre-post analysis, and analysis of proportion of participants reporting positive, negative, or no change.

As illustrated below, average ratings increased from start to end for all survey items.



As shown in Table 4, the pre-post changes were statistically significant with a moderate to large effect size. The largest improvements appeared to be around knowledge of the Canadian education system and receiving helpful career guidance and knowing how to achieve goals.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics and pre-post t-tests for participant survey responses.

Survey statistics	<i>I know how the Canadian education system works</i>	<i>I have received helpful education and career guidance</i>	<i>I feel connected to other people my age</i>	<i>I feel part of my local community</i>	<i>I know how to achieve my goals</i>	<i>I know how to find more help and resources</i>
Count	142	143	141	142	143	143
Average (M)	2.07	1.97	1.59	1.45	1.62	1.47
SD	2.64	2.72	3.03	2.76	2.36	2.80
SE	0.22	0.23	0.25	0.23	0.20	0.23
df	141	142	140	141	142	142
t-statistic	9.38	8.66	6.23	6.26	8.22	6.28
p-value	< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.001
d (effect size)	0.79 (large)	0.72 (large)	0.53 (moderate)	0.53 (moderate)	0.69 (moderate-large)	0.53 (moderate)

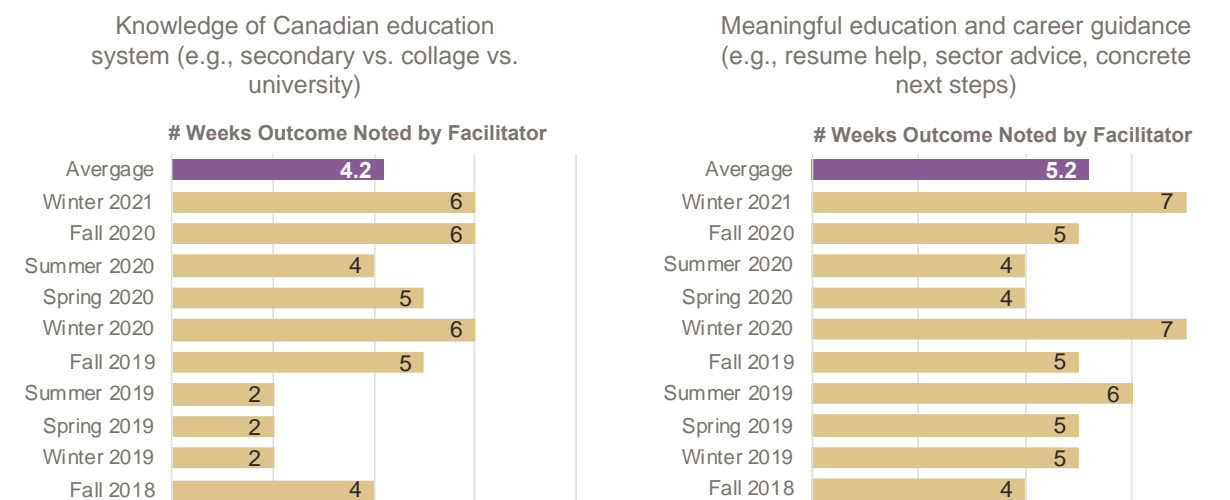
Overall, 131 of 143 (91%) participants reported improvement in one or more outcomes, 83% (118 of 143) reported improvements in two or more outcome items, and 69% reported improvements in three or more outcomes (98 of 143).

Examined item by item, about 60% of participants reported improvements for each item. See details in Appendix D.

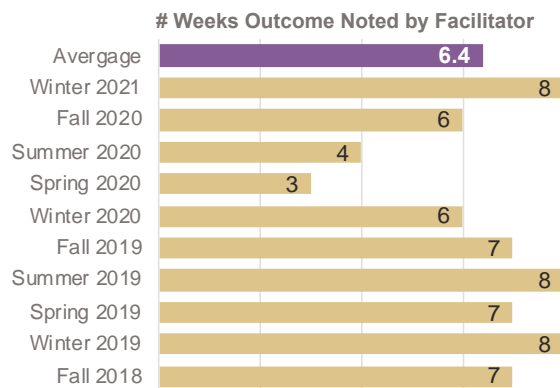
Qualitative outcome findings based on facilitator ratings.

During weekly sessions, facilitators watched for and recorded participants showing outcomes of interest.

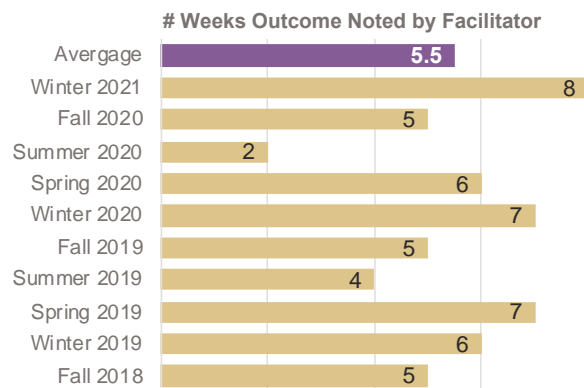
As illustrated in the figures below, on average, outcomes were noted in half or more of the weeks of each session. These findings from facilitator ratings align with the self-reported outcome improvements from participants.



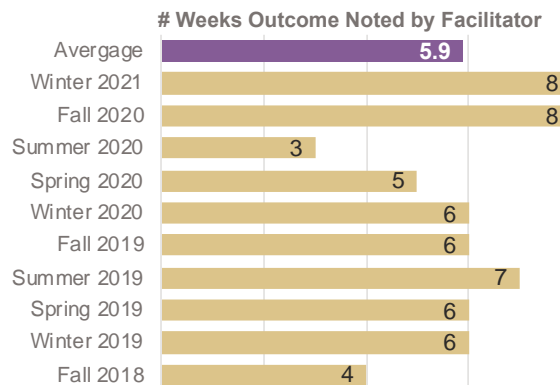
Interpersonal connections (e.g., friends, mentors, family)



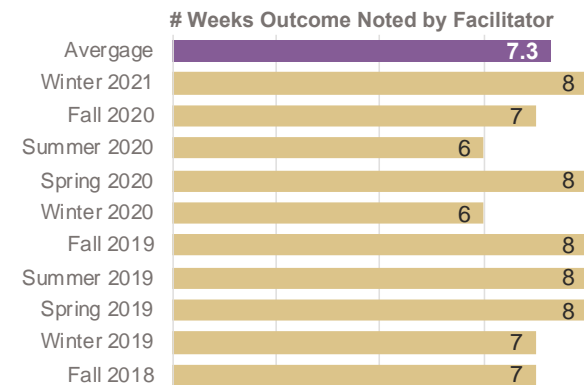
Belonging to local community (e.g., volunteering, sports, faith community participation)



Connection to resources & workshop mentors (e.g., mentioned in class)



Personal development (e.g., education, hobby, employment)



Qualitative outcome findings from participant survey

Key themes in the open-ended question “what was the biggest change for you as a result of the program” related to understanding of education and career goals and how to achieve them, connections with others and the local community, and self-confidence and wellbeing.

More specifically, themes in “biggest changes” included:

- Improving social skills
- Improving language and communication skills
- Improving mental health/wellbeing
- Improving sense of community
- Making friends
- Learning about other cultures
- Learning how to navigate government and educational structures
- Learning about career options

In participants' own words from the survey, the biggest changes for them were:



As a result of the program the biggest change for me was, to have a confidence and developing my communication skills.

I feel connected to other people my age. I know how to achieve my goals.

I got lots of information on how to pursue my career. And made lots of new friends!

I have more resources that I can rely on as I join the workforce

I know how the Canadian education system works and I feel connected to other people.

I learned there a lot of other programs in our community. And I feel more connected to the community.

I received helpful educational guidance.

That I know how to prepare for my future.

The big change happened in this program is to think about everything, do better in my live and to look what future I want

Other comments on participant surveys included positive feedback about the relevance and quality of the curriculum and staff support, and a desire to participate further.

It was so awesome, and it was a very nice experience. I liked the host and the moderators - they were cheerful and enthusiastic and [I] learnt loads.

Qualitative outcome findings from facilitator, community partner, and staff focus groups

Youth facilitators describe learning, sharing, and connecting

The youth facilitators emphasized how **practically informative** the program was to them. For instance, as participants they learned about their post-secondary education options, how to search for work, and even “obstacles to careers that mentors have overcome.” As one youth explained, “it’s a multipurpose program in this way. It helps you to learn about the libraries, other programs, job opportunities, career paths, education, meeting people, art, language etc.” As individuals they also gained advice and guidance from the facilitator.

“The program is really helpful. I was a newcomer when I joined the program but I didn’t know a lot of information about Canada or the education system here. It connected me with a lot of people. If I needed help the coordinator connected me with new people. I made new friends. I got resources to things that will help me in the future.”

As co-facilitators, the youth enjoyed sharing what they had learned with new participants.

In turn they learned more practical information from those participants since some, for example, “knew more about school, or spoke other languages.” In this way youth both gained knowledge and found pathways for supporting one another through **knowledge exchange**.

Beyond information gathering then, participants had **fun**, made **friends**, and improved their English **language skills** significantly as a result of making **broad social connections** in the program with other newcomer and immigrant youth, from other cultures. One youth explained

that they “broke up into little groups and talked within them so that made it easier to talk to people.” Another related that practicing her conversational English in this program enabled her to be more successful when she had to make a speech in school.

Community partners describe youth gaining confidence, connections, and a reciprocal benefit

Community partners report that they see **youth developing confidence and a sense of social integration** through the program because they improve their English skills, learn about resources in their community, and gain information to guide them toward their educational and professional goals. This led one partner to reflect that the program is “connecting youth with a large number of careers. We don’t do enough work to connect newcomer youth to their future careers outside of this program.” Uniquely, Let’s Talk approaches **career counselling** in a way that is accessible to newcomer youth because it connects them with mentors and other youth who reflect a variety of ethnic backgrounds.

Youth also have opportunities to develop **leadership skills and connections to other youth**, especially as they become more involved with partner organizations. For example, through the partnership with KWAG, Let’s Talk youth join forces with the gallery’s Youth Council to host activities and recruit other youth into both organizations.

Community partners also explained that **their organizations benefit** from participating in Let’s Talk programming, because it helps them to make their **services more broadly known and trusted** by newcomer youth. Many partners reported that they are able to bring youth into their own services through the Let’s Talk program because youth develop a rapport with them when they attend Let’s Talk meetings. As one partner explained:

At the same time, the **youth often become a resource to those partner organizations**. For example, Let’s Talk hosts their meetings at the library, which has in-turn seen more youth signing up for library cards and using their space outside of meeting times. Some of these same youth have also become library volunteers.

Let’s Talk’s partnership with KWAG has also had reciprocal benefits. It has enabled many youth to attend an art gallery for the first time, to work with the artist in residence, and to become arts educators. This partnership enables the gallery to cultivate a younger and more culturally and linguistically diverse audience of gallery patrons and volunteers.

KWAG told us that their partnership with Let’s Talk has evolved overtime, becoming increasingly dynamic and collaborative, with youth from both organizations taking a lead role. This has created **a new partnership model** for the gallery and has enabled them to do community engagement work that has **led to new funding** sources.

“Youth got a lot of help. One of my friends volunteered for a lot within programs that he learned about through the Let’s Talk program. His English is good now and he knows a lot of people.”

“A program like Let’s Talk is a fantastic option for helping kids learn about their own community and see what resources are available to them as individuals. Out of that comes self-confidence. It supports their integration, their transition into a new life, and that growing awareness and confidence and feeling of security that they know their city and what’s available to them and the language skills as well. Also, any opportunity they have to operate in English and be exposed to English speakers is highly beneficial and very difficult for them to create in their home environment where we also want them growing in their home languages.”

Program staff describe growth in youth communication, aspirations, and inclusion

Staff of the KWMC who were involved in Let's Talk reflected at length on the ways in which they have seen youth flourish through participation in the program. They perceive youth to have gained confidence, **communication skills**, and **maturity** while fostering **intercultural friendships**, which leads them to exchange practical information and emotional support with one another. Consequently, the youth "get to know the community better, and each other, and themselves."

Staff are often moved emotionally by the transformations they witness. One described that transformation this way: "I see fear in the youth at the beginning. When they start the program as a newcomer, they don't know the language. At the end, when I ask them, they say I'm going to be a doctor, I'm going to be an astronaut." In this way, youth indicate that they have gained **experiences** and a sense of **belonging** that fuels their **aspirations**.

The success of this program has led to the organization as a whole gaining more of a youth engagement perspective. Staff claim that the program is effectively **fostering** principles of **diversity** and **inclusivity** in general by bringing together youth from varying cultural backgrounds, with guest speakers and activity leaders who mirror their diversity while reflecting their specific interests and goals.

These speakers/leaders represent partner community agencies. The varied nature of these

partnerships allows staff to customize the program for each unique group of youth. These

partnerships are also instrumental for recruitment, and in some cases provide translation support, space, and other support. It is through these partnerships that the program is able to bring together "many concrete resources in one space", to connect youth *and* their families to an array of community supports. Staff noted that without the program, the community as a whole would be "less inclusive", and newcomer families would be more isolated.

"Seeing a youth participant go from being quiet to rapping their poem over a microphone— there's nothing better than that!"

Within the program, inclusivity is also encouraged by enabling the youth to take **ownership** of their space. They create playlists and select images reflective of their interests. **Arts activities** are also used throughout the program to enable youth to explore concepts and express themselves using a variety of media. The creative and interactive nature of these activities fosters language skills. For instance, small teams of youth will write short scripts, and present plays to the whole group. They will also plan, direct, and debrief their activities orally.

Findings from workshop attendance

Workshop registration and attendance is detailed in Table 5. Overall, registration was highly variable across the sessions. It took time to identify how (and how much) to recruit, and that some over-subscription of the program helped account for natural attrition.

For the first two sessions, average session attendance was relatively low (44 and 58% respectively). This led to the Let's Talk program refining intake and recruitment (to set expectations about attending all sessions if possible) and adjusting the curriculum order and focus. With these changes to registration and the curriculum, average attendance to more than 85% for the in-person Let's Talk sessions from spring 2019 to fall 2019.

Table 5. Findings on number of registered youth attending Let's Talk workshops²

Session #	Session name	# registered (total)	# at first session	# at final session	average # across all 8 sessions	% attendance (average/total)
1	Fall 2018	16	14	5	7	44%
2	Winter 2019	24	15	16	14	58%
3	Spring 2019	24	2	26	21	88%
4	Summer 2019	9	6	11	9	100%
5	Fall 2019	56	63	49	51	91%
6	Winter 2020	29	31	12	26	90%
7	Spring 2020	5	2	5	4	80%
8	Summer 2020	10	6	14	12	120%
9	Fall 2020	27	7	11	12	44%
10	Winter 2021	19	17	17	18	95%

Once COVID required moving the program online³, participation increased during the spring and summer months of 2020, but registration was lower for the online version of the program. Once the youth returned to school (fall 2020), attendance decreased again.

Overall, the Let's Talk program created an engaging set of in person activities. Replicating this learning and networking community online was more challenging. Also, it appears that youth may be less likely to attend online workshops when they are also attending school online.

Findings on Number of mentors/advisers connected with program

It was not possible to directly track connections with mentors and advisors outside of the program curriculum. However, connection to resources and mentors were noted by facilitator observations in most weeks of the program (average 6 weeks with outcome present, out of 8-week program).

Findings on Number of youth accessing community services

About 1 in 5 youth (21%) were attending one or more other community programs or services.

The other 79% were not attending any additional programs or did not note any programs being attended on their survey.

The most commonly attended programs were:

- YMCA programs, including the Newcomer and Leadership programs
- Pathways to Education program at Carizon
- English conversation circle

Overall, most youth were not attending programs and services. Let's Talk is likely a major contributor to outcome changes for participating youth. At the same time, Let's Talk is helping youth connect with additional programs and supports. Several youth participants indicated that they learned about programs that they would attend in the future.

² Volunteer facilitators were not counted in this tally, nor were guests or siblings of participants who attended sessions.

³ Winter 2020 final two sessions moved online due to COVID. Spring, Summer, and Fall 2020 were all online, as was Winter 2021.

Process Evaluation: What We Learned About Program Delivery

Process takeaways from facilitator, community partner, and staff focus groups

Youth facilitators explain youth-centred activities and direct benefits promote engagement

Youth facilitators described **positive aspects of the program**, such as the two-hour time frame for programming, that the programming was varied and allowed them to be physically active, and that food was included.

They particularly appreciated that the program content was **tailored to their interests**. One youth related, “I was interested in programming and Anika brought in a programmer to speak with us.” In comparison, they felt that other programs they have experienced were less directed by youth interests and were therefore less accessible.

They said that many youth benefited by completing their required **volunteer hours** through this program and this was something that they themselves either didn't know about or didn't know how to manage prior to being involved in Let's Talk. This was cited as a major reason that youth join the program, in addition to the fact that they are looking for something to do with their time and that they were recruited by friends.

One youth suggested that **more STEM activities** would help to better engage those interested in STEM careers. Another advised that **more games** would help shy youth to interact with others. A third noted that **barriers** for some interested youth included that they weren't the right **age** or that their English **language** skills were too limited, although youth helped each other with translation.

When asked about the current state of **the program online**, we heard that the youth have been following it on **Instagram** and through the emailed **newsletter**. They find both formats appealing⁴, although one said that they often overlook Instagram posts because they are following many accounts, suggesting a drawback of the online environment. Another youth told us that through the program's Instagram they have gained information about summer job opportunities, which they need to prepare for university. One youth that is currently co-facilitating explained that it is **difficult to get participants to speak** online when they have the option to type. However, they are also innovating online with some **new activities** that suit the virtual environment, such as music recording.

Overall the youth we spoke with felt strongly that the program should continue and must grow to **accommodate more youth** because it is unique in providing youth with a variety of **information and opportunities for development in one place**.

Community partners note how responsive programming works best in person in small groups

Partners applauded the program's high level of **youth engagement and responsiveness**, evident in the programming, the diversity and disposition of staff and mentors, the way youth speak of their experience in the program, and that they return to volunteer as facilitators. As one partner explains, “the programming has felt very responsive. It moves in the direction of the participants' interests, which empowers them. Also, anybody I've met from the program is enthusiastic, friendly, welcoming, diverse, which all helps to make those initial connections.”

⁴ The Youth Engagement Coordinator of the Volunteer Action Centre of Waterloo Region has provided a letter attesting to the engaging use Let's Talk is making of their Instagram platform through online events and story takeovers, while presenting information in a “honest and straightforward way” using effective graphic design and accessibility features such as closed captioning.

Another partner credited the program coordinator's qualities in particular, explaining that "Anika's a consistent face who [the youth] know and trust, and see as a strong leader and great presenter."

Partners also said that youth are attracted to the after-school program meetings because of some practical aspects, such as timing and location, and the provision of dinner. However, partners believe that having multiple concurrent groups meeting at **various locations would better accommodate youth across Kitchener, Waterloo, and Cambridge**. As it is, the group has been meeting in a central location, but it is too far from home for many youth. When the group has convened elsewhere, it can be a challenge for some community partners.

As a consequence of there being only one group at a time, Let's Talk accommodated **almost 60 youth** in the fall/winter 2020 session. This large of a group made it difficult for some mentors to hold the attention of youth in a workshop and may have limited the engagement of some youth. This is another reason that partners advocate for multiple groups.

One mentor noted that the program requires a fairly high level of **English comprehension** for youth to interact in the sessions or to know what questions to ask. (This informant had not been able to observe the use of translation services in session which we heard are commonly available.) This may be another limitation within a large group.

Community partners also noted that language is a barrier to **online engagement** for ESL learners. Furthermore, newcomer youth often do not have access to technology, and frequently have extensive responsibilities at home that prevent them from being online. Youth have also been expressing fatigue with the online environment since they have had to rely on it for all schooling and most social interaction during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moving the program online has also limited word of mouth promotion since it has been less visible, and youth have been more isolated from one another, during this time. Fortunately, some community partners have been able to transfer some of their material to the online environment to share with Let's Talk youth.

There is an opportunity to **transition youth to working on projects with community partner organizations** after each eight-week Let's Talk session ends. This would enable community partners to work on longer term projects with Let's Talk youth and help youth to remain connected to community beyond their one-time experience as Let's Talk participants.

"Canadian born youth may be served by the guidance counsellors in schools, but I don't know if they have the training to support the newcomer youth given their unique barriers."

"Being able to see other youth who reflect themselves from an ethnic and religious perspective, encourages them to succeed and reduces barriers. It's important to continue doing this if we want to continue breaking down barriers and deal with our systemic barriers and encourage everyone to move toward post-secondary education and their career dreams."

Ultimately, community partners say that Let's Talk is **filling a gap** for newcomer youth services and providing valuable opportunities for learning and networking to **a growing population** of newcomer youth. Through partnerships, this intervention is helping to break down **systemic barriers**, and create more inclusive communities.

Program staff describe need for dedicated resources and how partnerships enrich programming
Staff commented on ways in which **programming might also be enriched** by broadening partnerships. A potential partnership with the local symphony, was cited as one example.

Another potential partnership would enable the program to directly link youth to government employment programs, rather than merely making referrals which are ineffective for youth who receive limited job search training in the program. Work toward reconciliation with Indigenous peoples was a third program development goal mentioned by staff. Staff are also interested in seeing youth address topics such as bullying, and peace building, as well as the roots of racism, sexism, and homophobia, and how these are inter-related. All of these areas of growth could potentially be facilitated through new or expanded partnerships with other community agencies.

Staff told us that the program already has a **high retention rate** (participants even attend meetings in bad weather!) and that most youth are eager to continue being involved with the program after their eight-week session ends. Staff explained that “every single session the youth want to come back and do more and be more involved.” There is demand from some alumni for focused leadership training opportunities as well. Currently, the coordinator remains connected to past and present program participants through a monthly newsletter, through Instagram, and more recently through individualized emails.

Bringing the program online during the pandemic has put more focus on that kind of **online support and engagement**. At the same time, staff have been challenged by the lockdown to keep programming creative, interactive, and visible, while youth are combatting screen fatigue.

As the need for ongoing and online engagement with program participants and alumni has grown, staff are calling for **more dedicated resources**. In particular, a consistent support staff person is needed to maintain youth engagement through social media. This role would include,

“This was the best experience I’ve had working with youth. There’s nothing that can replace being able to work so closely with youth, in terms of the poverty reduction goals.”

for instance, addressing current affairs relevant to youth (such as the Black Lives Matter movement). It could also entail facilitating monthly educational gatherings for program alumni.

We heard that youth who want to join the in-person program for the

first time normally encounter a highly detailed intake form and a long wait list. The wait list calls for **additional staffing** to facilitate more than one session concurrently.

The high demand from youth has also put pressure on program resources such as food. As numbers grow, the program is challenged to provide nutritious, culturally appropriate, budget conscious food for all, which can only be addressed through an increase in program **funding**.

Staff have been actively thinking about how they can respond to the **demand** from youth without including so many participants in any one group that the program **quality** is compromised. Increased staffing would help the program to manage multiple groups and to provide ongoing online support. It would also help the program to incorporate expanding partnerships and to collaborate with interested communities elsewhere (namely Cambridge and Guelph) that wish to replicate the program locally.

Themes from start/stop/continue

Participant

Participant themes about what to start or add to Let’s Talk related to requests for specific activities and programming to be offered during the sessions. Common themes in what to stop were excessive paperwork and starting late. Items to continue were field trips and experiential learning, guest speakers, staff working hard, and cultural and arts engagement (music, dancing, food).

Table 6. Start Stop Continue responses from participant newcomer youth.

Start Themes	Stop Themes	Continue Themes
Communicating with others/more group discussions Competitions More activities More art and drama activities More career and post-secondary education information More food options More sports More talks from people in a variety of professions <i>(nearly every job imaginable has been mentioned at least once)</i>	Starting late Too much paperwork Talking for too long	Dancing Field trips Food Guest speakers Music Working hard

Over the course of the program, start/stop/continue requests became increasingly specific, and more career focused. Looking at comments from cohorts impacted by COVID, some participants mentioned that the online format made it harder to make friends and connect with other participants, and more specific time for socialization could be helpful.

Facilitator/staff

Facilitator and staff themes in what to start or add to Let's Talk were better explanation of group rules and strategies to manage disruptive behaviour. Logistic changes were focusing on starting on time, improving the registration process, and making notes on youth to enable better reference letters. Other changes related to accommodation for religious holidays and improved activities and social media engagement.

Themes in what to stop were too much paperwork and technology. Continue themes were community mentorship, guest speaker variety, and reviewing rules at the beginning of the session. Other items to continue were music, Kahoot quizzes, food in the middle of the session, and using a semicircle format for in-person events.

Table 7. Start Stop Continue responses from facilitators and staff.

Start Themes	Stop Themes	Continue Themes
Better accommodation for Ramadan and other religious holidays Strategies/consequences for disruptive behaviour Explaining group rules Improve registration process Keeping notes to enable better reference letters More food variety More interactive activities and games Social media engagement Starting on time	Too much paperwork Too much technology	Community mentor notebooks Food in middle of session Incentives for registration Kahoot Music Reviewing group rules at beginning of sessions Semicircle format Variety of guest speakers

Changes over the course of the program were behavioural issues being mentioned less frequently further into the program (strategies were successful). In contrast, registration issues increased until the forms moved online. During the COVID sessions, many of the themes become more technical in nature. These included issues about connectivity, and how to maintain previous features of the program in an online context.

Summary of findings from process evaluation

Program strengths

We heard that Let's Talk is...

- Youth-directed, creative, and responsive to participants' interests
- Practically informative
- Popular and highly retentive of participants
- Logistically accessible and appealing: timing, location, food, physical activities, small group work
- Connecting youth (and their families) to educational opportunities and career paths, community resources and contacts
- Building leadership, language, and communication skills amongst youth
- Helping youth to develop friendships, intercultural social networks, confidence, enjoyment, aspiration
- Creating accessible volunteer opportunities for youth
- Fostering diversity and inclusion in the community
- Supporting the work of partner agencies by connecting them to newcomer youth (as volunteers, service users, and patrons)
- Modeling creative partnerships between organizations
- Filling a gap in services for a growing population of newcomer youth

Challenges and areas for improvement

Let's Talk would benefit from...

- Simplified intake forms
- Making bus tickets available before a meeting
- Additional program content related to STEM; music; Indigenous reconciliation work; social and systemic issues of power and oppression (e.g. bullying, homophobia)
- Employing more games
- Creating more opportunities for past participants to remain involved/supported and to develop advanced leadership skills
- Linking program alumni directly to projects, programs, and placements with community organizations
- Continuing to work toward creating an interactive online environment, recognizing the barriers (language, technology, screen fatigue, social isolation, and competing responsibilities for youth at home)
- Greater staffing capacity and resources to reduce the waitlist, to improve accessibility (specifically through multiple locations and with a broader age range), to capitalize on programming and partnership growth potential, and to provide adequate ongoing support to participants online and post-session



Conclusions

Main Conclusions

Let's Talk achieved desired outcomes for participants

Overall, the evaluation findings show that Let's Talk is achieving its short- and medium-term outcome goals. This is based on findings from the participant survey, focus groups, and facilitator observations.

After Let's Talk, newcomer youth participants had more knowledge, confidence, and resources to pursue their education and career goals. Participants also gained enhanced community and interpersonal supports.

- Increased awareness of and knowledge about the Canadian education system
- Helpful education and career guidance
- Improved interpersonal connections
- Improved sense of belonging and community connection
- Personal development of newcomer youth
- Knowing how to achieve their goals
- Being connected to help and resources

Based on these results, we expect the Let's Talk program has contribute to our long-term goals of improving high school graduation rates and reducing rates of youth not in education, employment, or training (NEET).

Let's Talk's delivered programming in an effective and engaging way

Process takeaways from facilitator, community partner, and staff focus, as well as program participants, show Let's Talk, overall, delivered programming in an engaging and effective way.

Youth facilitators explained youth-centred activities and direct benefits promoted engagement. Community partners noted how responsive programming works best in person in small groups. Program staff described need for dedicated resources and how partnerships enrich programming.

The Let's Talk workshop model of safe spaces to explore career and education interests, coupled with artful facilitation to build connections, was an effective and engaging way of providing this programming.

Let's Talk staff were continually iterating and refining the workshop model, to adapt to emerging information and changing conditions. This included transferring programming online due to COVID during the final year of the project.

Strengths and Limitations of This Report

A strength of this report is the multiple perspectives on program outcomes and quality (i.e., participants, facilitators, community mentors, program staff). Being able to triangulate and show similar perspectives from different sources makes our results stronger.

Another strength of this report is longitudinal ratings from participants, facilitators, and program staff. These included pre/post outcome ratings, as well as weekly reflection and observations.

A limitation of this report is that there was no control group. Due to the vulnerability of the target population (newcomer youth), and the long gap between program sessions, a wait list control was not appropriate for the Let's Talk program. No similar program are available in the community to serve as a control group - the Let's Talk program is filling an identified gap in service delivery in the KW region.

Recommendations

Recommendations are that these findings be used to support delivery similar programs in the future.

Based on these findings, future iterations of this program should attend to:

- Ensuring minimal barriers to participation (transportation, intake forms, etc.)
- Creating more opportunities for past participants to remain involved/supported and to continue to connect with community resources and opportunities
- Continuing to work toward creating an interactive online environment, recognizing the barriers
- Greater staffing capacity and resources to reduce the waitlist, to improve accessibility (specifically through multiple locations and with a broader age range), to capitalize on programming and partnership growth potential, and to provide adequate ongoing support to participants online and post-session
- Recognizing and working to minimize the burdens placed on program staff to responsively meet the needs of participants

Organizations and policymakers looking to fund similar initiatives should recognize the benefits of strengths-based tailored supports for helping newcomer youth to gain capacity, connections, and confidence to pursue their career and education goals.

Those designing future similar programs should note that process evaluation data is essential for evidence-informed improvements. In particular, collecting regular feedback from participants and program staff helps ensure responsive program delivery.

Next Steps

Next steps are sharing the findings and promising practices detailed in this evaluation report to improve future versions of Let's Talk and gain future support for the program. As of 2021, the Let's Talk program has successfully found five years of funding through IRCC.

Findings will also be shared to inform and improve career and employment supports offered through the KW Multicultural Centre.



Appendices

- A) [Let's Talk Core Curriculum and Additional Initiatives](#)
- B) [Let's Talk Logic Model](#)
- C) [Survey and Focus Group Questions](#)
- D) [Detailed Statistical Analysis](#)
- E) [References](#)

Appendix A: Let's Talk Core Curriculum and Additional Initiatives

Core Curriculum Example

The specific order of the 8-week curriculum changed from session to session. An example from Fall 2018 is provided here.

DATE	WORKSHOP TOPIC	Location
October 11 th	Welcome To “Let’s Talk”	Kitchener Public Library
October 18 th	Exploring Wellness	Kitchener Public Library
October 25 th	Field Trip: KWAG	Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery
November 1 st	What Do I Want to Be? (Canadian School System)	Kitchener Public Library
November 8 th	But I Need a Job! (Youth Employment)	Alert Labs
November 15 th	How Did You Do That? (Community Mentorship)	Alert Labs
November 22 nd	Your Rights	Kitchener Public Library
November 29 th	Now What? (Closing)	Kitchener Public Library

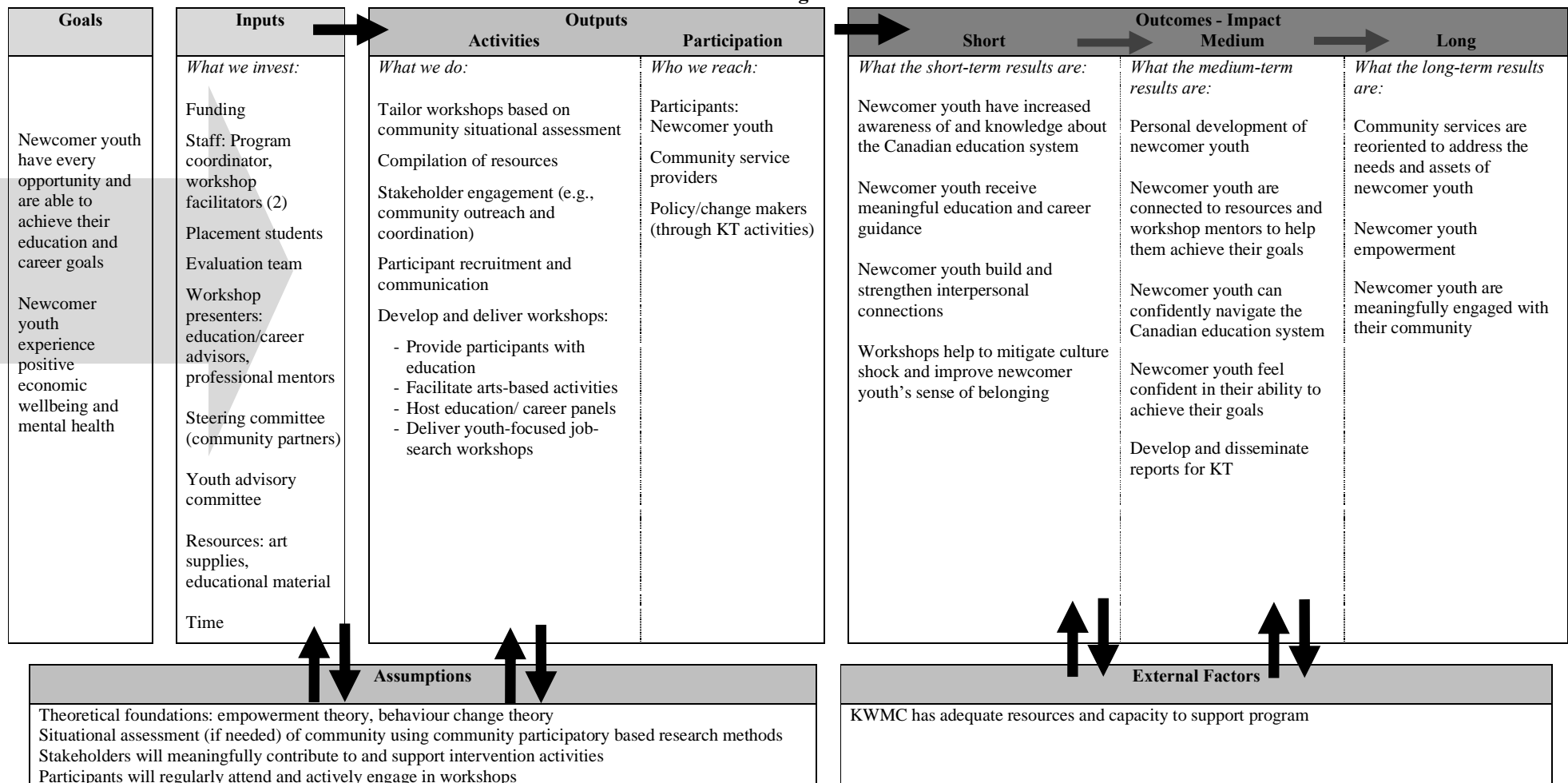
Additional curriculum content

In addition to the core programming, additional curriculum initiatives were developed based on youth interest. These included:

- Expressions 44 Exhibit at KWAG. Youth worked with artist geetha thuirairajah on developing art based on their experiences as newcomers, featured in exhibit.
- Youth Leadership Program. Opportunities to help support Let's Talk included Volunteer Youth Leaders, Youth takeover host, Kahoot Co-Host and Co-Coordinator, On-Call Support, TikTok content creator, etc.
- Kahoot Weekly Trivia (topics based on youth interests)
- Instagram Initiatives - open mic, youth takeover host, TikTok Fridays, Q&As with community partners, games on our stories
- Lead On Program - leadership program in partnership with Skills for Change
- Medical School Q&A
- Employment related workshops - e.g.) resume skills, job search skills, etc.
- Let's Talk Newsletter - sent out weekly with community resources
- Keeping Up the Fight: Anti-Racism and Allyship 101 presentation
- Field Trip Organized to Toronto STEM event (cancelled due to COVID)

Appendix B: Let's Talk Logic Model

Let's Talk - Logic Model



Appendix C: Survey and Focus Group Questions

Appendix C1. Participant outcome survey.

Until spring 2020, this survey was completed on paper. Participants completed the pre and post ratings with different colours of ink. Due to COVID-19, the survey moved online in 2020 (post-test for winter 2020, and as the pre/post-test thereafter).

Measuring My Progress: Outcome Temperatures

This survey is to help you understand what you know about the community and reaching your career and education goals. We will do this survey twice, once at the start and once at the end of program. It will help us see if you learned new things or made new connections from coming to program.

Name:

Start date:

End date:

Use the thermometers below to tell us what is true for you right now. Use a different colour pen (ink) for your answers at the start and end.
Picking 0 ☹ means the statement is “not at all true”. Picking 10 ☺ means “completely true”.

I know how the Canadian education system works.

I have received helpful education and career guidance.

I feel connected to other people my age.

I feel part of my local community.

I know how to achieve my goals

I know how to find more help and resources

What was the biggest change for you as a result of this program?

Is there anything else you want to tell us about the program?

What other programs or services are you attending?

Appendix C2. Observation Template.

Program facilitators observed and recorded evidence of participation outcomes at every session using the observation template.

Unit		Participant Outcomes					
	Program process notes	Knowledge of Canadian education system (e.g., secondary vs. collage vs. university)	Meaningful education and career guidance (e.g., resume help, sector advice, concrete next steps)	Interpersonal connections (e.g., friends, mentors, family)	Belonging to local community (e.g., volunteering, sports, faith community participation)	Personal development (e.g., education, hobby, employment)	Connection to resources & workshop mentors (e.g., mentioned in class)
Notes on observed behaviour (or gaps).							
Date							

Appendix C3. Continue start stop survey.

Participants provided start/stop/continue feedback weekly during the first session, then at the midpoint and endpoint in subsequent sessions.

Facilitators also provided start/stop/continue feedback at the midpoint and endpoint.

Date

Help up improve this workshop in the future! What should we:



Continue doing (what's working well)



Start doing (what needs to be added)



Stop doing (what should be removed)

Appendix C4. Focus group questions.

Questions for community mentors/partners and youth facilitators

1. How have you been involved in the Let's Talk Program?
 - a. Has this changed over time? How/why?
2. What impact did the Let's Talk Program have on you, your organization, and/or on youth participants in the program?
 - i. Community connections and service use?
 - ii. Education and career goals?
 - iii. Self-confidence and language skills?
3. What do you think works well in the program?
4. What do you think the program should stop doing or do differently?
5. What do you think the program should start doing that it isn't doing already?
6. Are there any barriers limiting the involvement of clients or partner organizations in the program?
7. From your perspective, what were the impacts of moving the program online during covid-19?
8. What would it be like if the Let's Talk program had *not* been funded and was not available in this community over the past two years?

Additional questions for KWMC staff and program facilitators

1. What can you tell us about what it was like to offer the Let's Talk program? (in the context of your role)
 - i. Particular things to note at start/middle/end of program?
 - ii. Similarities and differences between groups?
 - iii. Any big changes to the program over time?
- b. What trends are you noticing in youth participant outcomes?
 - i. For example, knowledge, skills, confidence, etc.
 - ii. How do participant outcomes change over the course of the program?
 - iii. Any changes in the groups as a whole (connections, cohesion etc.)?
- c. What do you recommend in terms of tailoring the Let's Talk programming to youth needs and interests while maintaining staff capacity?
 - i. For example, providing a certain amount of broadly useful information vs. responding to particular interests?
- d. What referral/ partner connections are essential for this kind of program?

Appendix D: Frequency Analysis Details

Frequencies of participants reporting positive change, negative change, and no change

	I know how the Canadian education system works	I have received helpful education and career guidance	I feel connected to other people my age	I feel part of my local community	I know how to achieve my goals	I know how to find more help and resources
# positive change	94	91	78	76	90	85
# no change	35	41	50	50	42	47
# negative change	13	11	13	16	11	11
Total	142	143	141	142	143	143
% positive change	66%	64%	55%	54%	63%	59%
% no change	25%	29%	35%	35%	29%	33%
% negative change	9%	8%	9%	11%	8%	8%

Note on ceiling effect for our rating scale

As shown in Appendix B, our rating scale for the participant survey used a thermometer-type visual scale from 0 (minimum) to 10 (maximum).

A substantial number of participants gave themselves top marks at pre-test (33 to 67 per question of 190 total).

These high pre-test ratings created a “ceiling effect” whereby their scores could not increase by post-test. This ceiling effect is one contributing factor to our item-level percentage positive change being under 80%.

Appendix E: References

Mayne, J. (2008). Contribution analysis: An approach to exploring cause and effect. *ILAC methodological brief*. Retrieved from <http://lib.icimod.org/record/13855/files/4919.pdf>

Mayne, J. (2012). Contribution analysis: Coming of age? *Evaluation*, 18(3), 270–280. <http://doi.org/10.1177/1356389012451663>