



# CULINARY TRAINING FOR YOUTH PROJECT 2016-2018

Evaluation Final Report [Draft]



Ontario  
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Catholic Family Services  
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SOCIETY OF ONTARIO

The Culinary Training for Youth (CTY) Project at Good Food Brampton was funded (2016-2018) by the Ontario Trillium Foundation's Local Poverty Reduction Program.

The CTY project was hosted and supported by Catholic Family Services Peel Dufferin and the John Howard Society of Peel, Halton, and Dufferin.

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# Executive Summary

The Culinary Training for Youth (CTY) project addressed the issue of youth unemployment and poverty in Peel Region. Specifically, the CTY program was designed to build employment and culinary skills and improve capacity and wellbeing among youth who experience particular challenges to employment (e.g., low-income, newcomer, living with disability).

The CTY program combined 8 weeks of in-kitchen culinary training and employment skills training with an 8-week practicum placement. Through the program, a youth advocate helped support youth to remove barriers to program completion.

Our overall project goal was to improve employment and education outcomes for CTY participants and to gather evidence about how to better deliver the CTY program.

Our key outcome evaluation question was: **Does Good Food Brampton’s Culinary Training for Youth (CTY) intervention improve employment and education outcomes for at-risk and newcomer youth in Peel?**

To supplement this examination of program outcomes, we also used process evaluation to investigate: **How and why did program delivery change during the CTY initiative? What were lessons learned?**

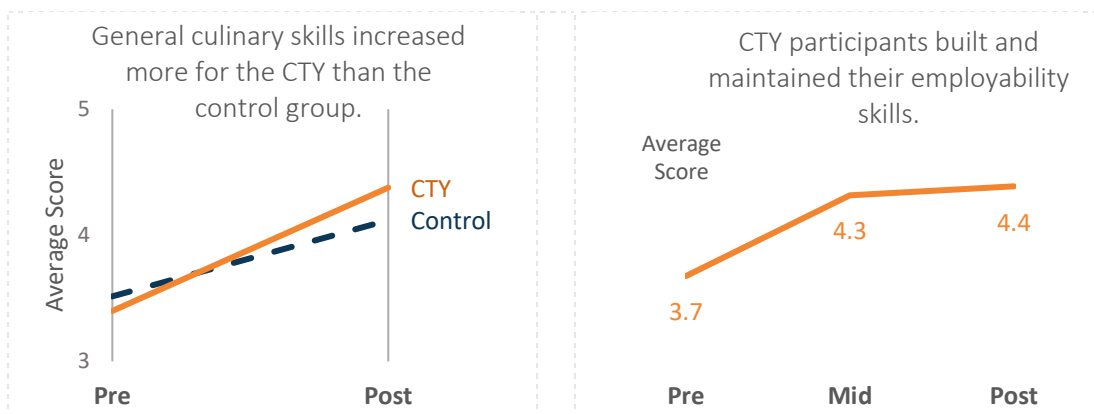
The evaluation used both quantitative and qualitative evaluation data collected at the start, middle, and end of the CTY program.

CTY participants ranged in age from 16 to 29, and 26% reported being born outside Canada. CTY participants represented diverse minority and racialized communities, with 48 different ethnocultural backgrounds identified. The CTY group identified as 57% female and 40% male gender.

We compared outcomes for CTY participants with a control group youth participants in a general food skills (FS) education program. Specifically, we looked at participant employment and education outcomes, as well as psychosocial, health, and food use, across the CTY intervention group and FS control group.

Overall, 159 CTY participants and 82 FS control group participants took part in the project evaluation, with post-program sample sizes of 63 CTY and 57 FS participants, respectively.

We found that for youth well-suited to this program, CTY had positive outcomes related to employment readiness (both in the culinary trades and transferable skills for other industries) and general knowledge about food and the food service industry.



*I am more confident working in a big kitchen, and I have more experience working with people from all walks of life. I am more willing to take on responsibility & initiative that I was early on, as I would wait to be told what to do a lot of the time."*

Even CTY participants who did not continue with culinary work gained transferrable employment readiness skills and knowledge. CTY participants also improved their social connections, wellbeing, and self-confidence, and health. For students who completed the program, 88% were employed at program exit.

The CTY program worked particularly well for youth who were motivated to pursue an educational and certification opportunity, and had the personal capacity to work in the culinary industry. Our findings capture mainly the outcomes and insights of youth who were successful in the program, and who completed the in-kitchen and placement components of the program. Of the 190 students who started the program, 127 completed the in-kitchen training and 74 completed the placement.

Key learning about program delivery in early program cycles were that careful outreach, recruitment, support, and tailored learning environments were keys to participant success and to mitigating attrition. Building a recruitment network of referral partners and employers takes time and ongoing effort. When designing programs for youth experiencing poverty, program staff need to attend to different levels of poverty severity and intersectional issues among participants, as well as manage tensions between individual and group needs.

The other key learning was that every participant and cohort is different. Flexible and responsive participant support was vital to helping at-risk youth gain needed skills and confidence for education and employment. Informing and managing participant expectations enables program retention and completion.

Overall, the CTY program improved employment, education, psychosocial, and wellbeing outcomes for the target population, with positive results particularly evident for participants who completed the program.

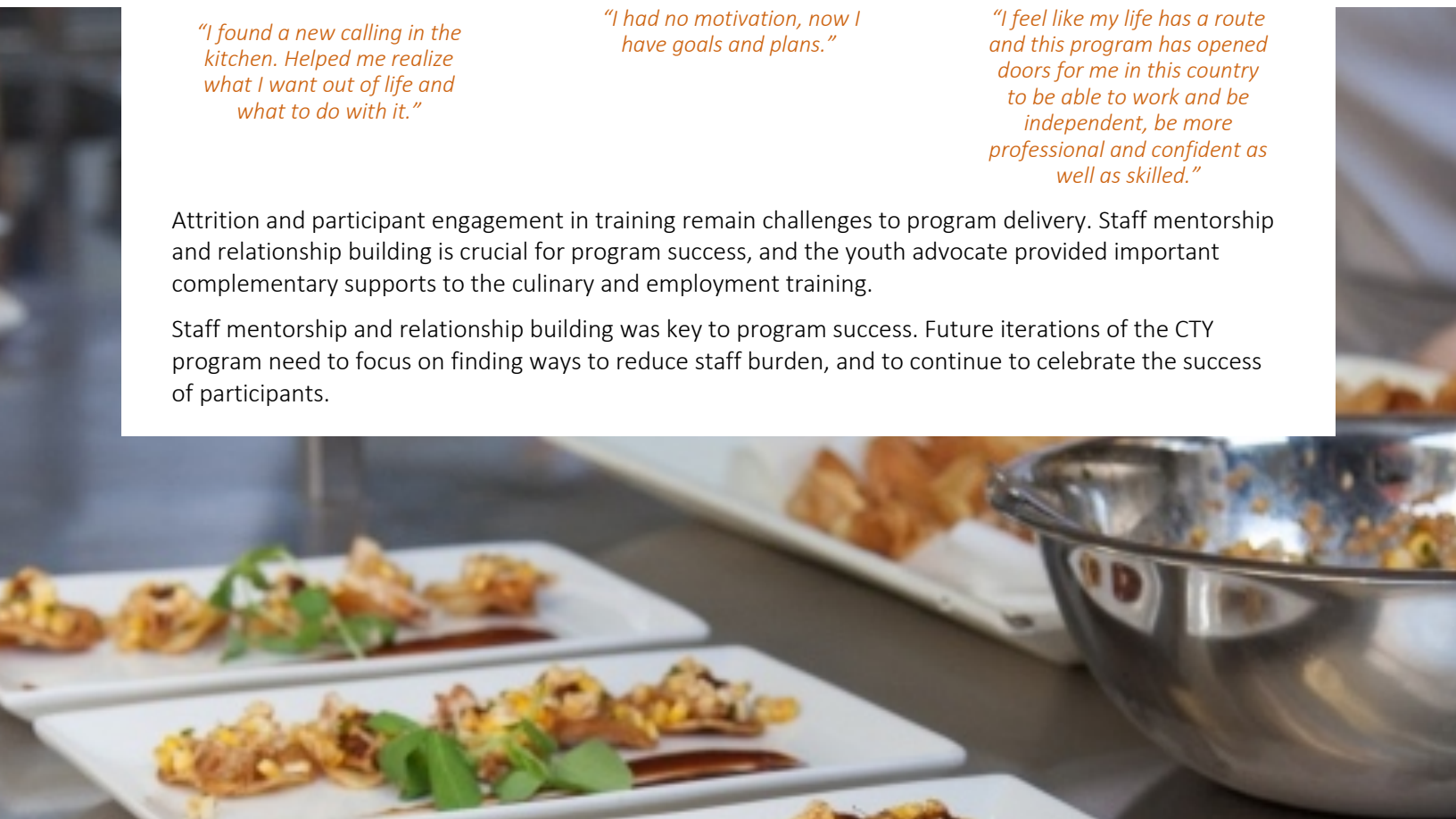
*"I found a new calling in the kitchen. Helped me realize what I want out of life and what to do with it."*

*"I had no motivation, now I have goals and plans."*

*"I feel like my life has a route and this program has opened doors for me in this country to be able to work and be independent, be more professional and confident as well as skilled."*

Attrition and participant engagement in training remain challenges to program delivery. Staff mentorship and relationship building is crucial for program success, and the youth advocate provided important complementary supports to the culinary and employment training.

Staff mentorship and relationship building was key to program success. Future iterations of the CTY program need to focus on finding ways to reduce staff burden, and to continue to celebrate the success of participants.



# Introduction

## Problem: Youth Unemployment and Poverty in Peel Region

Peel region has challenges with poverty and unemployment. According to a 2018 United Way report, Peel's unemployment rate sits at 8.2% - above the provincial average of 7.4%. Based on the 2016 census, 12.8% of households in Peel are low-income, and half of Peel neighbourhoods represent people with low or very low incomes (United Way Toronto and York Region, 2017).

The problem of poverty and unemployment is more severe for young people, especially those living in racialized, minority, and other at-risk<sup>1</sup> communities. In Peel, the youth unemployment rate for youth 15-24 was 13%, and 16% of racialized communities were living in poverty (United Way, 2018).

Thus, some youth in Peel face additional challenges in finding work. In particular, newcomer youth face more obstacles to employment than other youth, are less likely than their Canadian-born counterparts to have work experience; youth living in poverty face similar additional barriers (Anisef & Killbride, 2000; CCSD, 1998). Without intervention, they are at risk of continuing to live in poverty and the associated negative impacts.

## One Solution: Culinary and Employment Skills Training

### At-risk youth need skills and capacity for stable employment

High youth unemployment and a skills shortage are both challenges facing the Canadian labour market, and youth are being encouraged to acquire skills to meet labour demands (Ades, 2012). Negative long-term consequences for youth from prolonged unemployment are referred to as "scarring" and include: lower lifetime income, lower job satisfaction, and reduced future health. To prevent "scarring", Scarpetta and colleagues (2010) recommend investment in apprenticeships, enhanced income supports, and training programs.

Workplaces require both formal skills (e.g. math/writing) and informal skills (e.g. social skills) (Liimatainen, 2000). Youth also need specific knowledge and skills to support a job search and application process. Poor communication and self-presentation skills, and use of ineffective job-search strategies can all disadvantage young people (Russell et al., 2014). A growing body of evidence suggests that non-academic skills are key for employment for at-risk youth (Lerman 2013). Moreover, informal skills are best learned in a job/apprenticeship context, rather than an academic one (Lerman, 2013).

A (2014) Peel report found two effective intervention areas for developing resilience in at-risk youth are programs which 1) build on the youth's social, emotional and personal competence and 2) cultivate social capital and connectedness with community resources (LeMoine & Labelle, 2014).

Halpern (2009; as cited in Lerman 2013) found that experimental, hands-on learning builds occupational skills along with problem-solving, teamwork, and self-confidence. Review research has found that youth unemployment training is more effective when it targets youth at higher risk of poor education and employment outcomes, and when activities are well-structured (Jekielek et al., 2002).

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<sup>1</sup> In this report we use "at-risk" to refer to negative health and wellbeing impacts of poverty, unemployment, economic inequality, and other social determinants of health.

## Good Food Brampton’s Culinary Training program builds food service and employability skills to meet demand in Peel

One viable option for hands-on learning and job skills is in the food service industry. The food service sector is a major employer in Brampton and the broader Peel Region. (Brampton Economic Development Office, 2017; Peel Data Centre, 2016). Of the top 5 industries employing youth in 2013, “Accommodation and Food Services” ranked second, up nearly 3% from a decade earlier (Service Canada, 2014). The growth of the food service and accommodation sector in Peel has been matched with youth interest in cooking and culinary work. A recent study (Clyne & Krause, 2013,p.43) found “The number one interest of all youth... involves opportunities to learn about cooking”.

Realizing that employment is a path out of poverty for youth, and that certain youth, including newcomers, face more barriers to employment (including language, relevant skills, lack of job experience in Canada, etc.), Good Food Brampton has developed food skilling programs for at-risk low-income youth to gain employable skills in the food industry. The **Culinary Training for Youth** program, the focus on this report, provided culinary and employment training to at-risk youth.

## Culinary Training for Youth (CTY) Intervention Overview

### Funding and project

Good Food Brampton and Catholic Family Services Peel Dufferin received a Local Poverty Reduction Fund grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation to fund the CTY intervention and evaluation of process and outcomes.

This report details findings from process and outcome evaluation of the Culinary Training for Youth program from 2016-2018.

### Theory of Change: Culinary training intervention to reduce youth employment

The CTY program was created based on existing expertise at Good Food Brampton and evidence from the literature around providing tailored emotional, informational, and practical supports to at-risk youth trainees. The CTY program emphasized hands-on learning as well as employability skills and certifications (e.g., Smart Serve, food handling certificate) needed to gain and retain employment in the food services industry.

Specifically, the CTY theory of change explains that a combination of (1) culinary in-kitchen practical training; (2) employment readiness training; (3) one-to-one mentorship/systems navigation support; and (4) industry-appropriate food safety certification will increase participants’ knowledge and skills, psychosocial functioning, and problem solving and employability skills, leading to improved youth employment and education outcomes.

### ***Culinary and employment skills training***

Participants in the 16-week CTY program:

- Obtained **hands-on training in real-life cooking establishment** with state-of-the-art commercial equipment and a certified instructor
- Received **training in the psycho-social (soft) and technical skills** required to obtain and retain employment (e.g., self-confidence, workplace communication, culinary skills)
- Received **on-the-job training** at work placements and job shadowing
- Participated in Good Food Brampton program sustainability by contributing a minimum of 10 volunteer hours to wider community food security activities

### *Tailored supports and advocacy*

CTY program partners recognized that training alone would not be sufficient to meet the needs of the at-risk youth participants. Therefore, a “Youth Advocate” position was created to help participants connect to the **supports and services** they needed to **address barriers to program completion**, including information, ongoing and crisis support, and referral services, as well as transportation supports (Presto transit card).

### Target CTY Population

The CTY intervention was designed for low-income youth in the Peel community, targeting high-risk youth, newcomer youth, and/or youth with disabilities. Specifically, Good Food Brampton’s Culinary Training for Youth (CTY) program provided entry level food service skills to youth between the ages of 15-29, who were unemployed or underemployed, eligible to work in Canada, and had a desire to work in the culinary sector but lacked the necessary skills.

### Food Skills control group

A general Food Skills Education youth group was selected as a non-equivalent control group to the CTY intervention. The Food Skills (FS) education program was an 8-week program that focused on general cooking and nutrition skills, rather than on culinary-training and employment readiness. The target of the Food Skills group was generally youth still in public school, in contrast to the target youth in CTY, who had mostly completed secondary school and were looking for employment and education opportunities. However, the control group allows for comparisons of outcomes from providing general food skill education, as opposed to intensive culinary and employment training.

### Project management and governance

Project operations were managed via collaboration among staff from Catholic Family Services Peel Dufferin (Good Food Brampton Kitchen Manager and Chef, Youth Advocate, research assistant) and John Howard (Employment Relations Liaison, Manager of Employment Services). The overall project was managed by the Good Food Brampton kitchen manager. For this project, a part-time research assistant was hired to collect and administer survey data and focus groups.

Project strategy and oversight was accomplished via bimonthly steering committee meetings with program staff (Catholic Family Services Peel Dufferin and John Howard) and members of the evaluation team (Knowledge to Action Consulting Inc). Regular check-ins, reflection, and troubleshooting were used to support project implementation, and to refine and improve project delivery.





# Evaluation Goals

## Overall Evaluation Questions

Our overall goal was to improve employment and education outcomes for CTY participants and to gather evidence about how to better deliver the CTY program.

Our key outcome evaluation question was: **Does Good Food Brampton’s Culinary Training for Youth (CTY) intervention improve employment and education outcomes for at-risk and newcomer youth in Peel?**

To supplement this examination of program outcomes, we also used process evaluation to investigate: How and why did program delivery change during the CTY initiative? What were lessons learned?

## Specific CTY Outcome Goals

The CTY program logic model details how the program activities delivered to participants, together with internal coordination and project management, will create positive outcome results for participants. The overall Culinary Training for Youth logic model, adapted from the larger Good Food Brampton model, is presented in Appendix A.

Based on our logic model, we expected that the CTY intervention would lead to outcome improvements in the short-term (culinary and employment knowledge, skills, self-confidence), intermediate term (application of skills) and long-term (employment and education; wellbeing). Food security and access was also examined, as an important enabler of stable employment and education.

### Short-term outcomes: knowledge, skills, and motivation.

- Improved culinary skills and knowledge (food production, food preparation, budgeting and managing food)
- Improved informal kitchen skills and knowledge (planning/organization, language, communication, numeracy)
- Improved employment readiness (knowledge of how to find and apply for jobs, employment expectations, resumes, interview skills, etc.)
- Increased confidence, self-esteem, and social connections (decreased social isolation)

### Intermediate-term outcomes: applying skills and knowledge.

- Increased application of culinary skills & knowledge
- Increased stability/regularity of healthy food use and consumption of nutritious/local food.

### Long-term outcomes<sup>2</sup>: employment and wellbeing.

- Increased employment and financial security
- Improved overall health and well-being
- Decreased stress/life disruption due to food insecurity

We also expected the CTY intervention would lead to greater improvements in outcomes variables related to employment and education, as compared to the control group.

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<sup>2</sup> We expected our outcomes would contribute to the Poverty Reduction Strategy indicators of: (1) Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) (age 15-29); (2) Long-Term Unemployment (age 25-64); and High School Graduation Rates. We were able to track progress towards these indicators for graduating participants, and at 6-month follow-up for a subset of CTY participants.

# Evaluation Methods

## Mixed Methods Outcome Evaluation Approach

To answer our outcome evaluation questions, we used a mixed-methods quasi-experimental approach.

We collected qualitative and quantitative data at the program start, middle (after the in-kitchen and employment training), and end (after the placement), and at 6-month follow-up for each youth cohort<sup>3</sup>. We collected data through a combination of in-person surveys (pre/mid/post-program), focus groups (post-program), and phone-based surveys (6-month follow-up).

### Quantitative Methods and Analysis

We compared short-term, mid-term, and long-term outcomes for CTY participants with a control group youth participants in a general food skills (FS) education program. Specifically, we looked at participant employment and education outcomes, as well as psychosocial, health, and food use, across the CTY intervention group and FS control group.

Our evaluation approach maximized our ability to make causal attributions<sup>4</sup> about program outcomes and impacts while minimizing evaluative burden on vulnerable populations.

### *Quantitative Outcome Indicators*

As detailed in the table below, all outcome goals were assessed using a mix of quantitative and qualitative indicators. See Appendix B for question details. The measures were designed to be brief and plain language, to minimize survey burden on participants and to account for potentially diverse levels of English-language skills. Where possible, scales were adapted from existing measures.

Outcome Goals	Indicators
Improved culinary skills and knowledge (food preparation, production, budgeting and management).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 3-item quantitative scale*</li><li>• Qualitative self-report.</li><li>• Instructor rating and assessment (pass/fail)</li></ul>
Improved informal skills (planning/ organization/ language, numeracy/ communication)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 4-item quantitative scale*</li><li>• Qualitative self-report.</li><li>• Instructor rating and assessment (pass/fail)</li></ul>
Increased confidence and self- esteem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 3-item quantitative scale adapted from Canada Community Health Survey (self-esteem) and the General Self-Efficacy Scale</li><li>• Qualitative self-report.</li></ul>

<sup>3</sup> The final cohorts did not complete the 6-month follow-up, due to project deadlines.

<sup>4</sup> Due to the vulnerable intervention population, it would have been unethical to provide a no-treatment control condition. In this program, random assignment to conditions was not possible, so we used a non-equivalent control group design. As a result, all participants received some form of food skills, knowledge, and psychosocial support (either CTY intervention or FS control).

Improved employment readiness skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8-item quantitative scale (custom &amp; adapted from Employability Skills Profile, Conference Board of Canada, 2000)</li> </ul>
Increased social connections (decreased social isolation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3-item quantitative scale*</li> <li>Qualitative self-report</li> <li>Instructor rating and assessment.</li> </ul>
Increased stability/regularity of healthy food access and use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3-item quantitative scale*</li> <li>Qualitative self-report.</li> <li>Instructor rating and assessment.</li> </ul>
Increased application of specific culinary skills/knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6-item quantitative scale*</li> <li>Qualitative self-report. Instructor rating and assessment.</li> </ul>
Improved overall health and well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6-item quantitative scale*, adapted in part from Canada Community Health Survey (general health)</li> <li>Qualitative self-report.</li> </ul>
Decreased stress/life disruption due to food insecurity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative self-report<sup>5</sup></li> </ul>
Increased employment and financial security	<p>Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) (age 15-29), Long-Term Unemployment (age 25-64)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employment/education status at program exit and follow-up (self-reported)</li> <li>Job placement rate</li> <li>School/training enrollment rate</li> <li>Regional employment data (secondary data for comparison purposes)<sup>6</sup></li> </ul>

The internal consistency of scales was examined based on pre-test data. As summarized in Appendix C, all scales had adequate psychometrics to support the planned analysis.

### Qualitative Methods and Analysis

The qualitative findings from the Culinary Training for Youth (CTY) are based on the open-ended survey questions collected at the program start, midpoint (after the kitchen training), and endpoint (after the placement), as well as from end of program focus groups. The CTY qualitative findings were compared to the same data set (open-ended survey questions and focus groups) for the FS control group<sup>7</sup>. The quantitative findings are based on statistical analysis of outcomes over time (pre/mid/post) and between the CTY and FS control groups.

<sup>5</sup> Due to low follow-up rates, High School Graduation Rates was removed as an indicator of food security impacts

<sup>6</sup> Due to low follow-up rates, CTY participant outcomes at could not be compared to regional employment data. Instead, we used regional data to monitor employment trends in Peel.

<sup>7</sup> The findings from the Food Skill cohort are not the focus of this report, and as such, they are summarized in a short paragraph at the end of each main section, for comparison purposes.

### *Thematic analysis of survey responses*

The qualitative data from each round of the survey (pre/mid/post) for both the CTY and FSP were hand coded using a set of codes that were developed from the logic model outcomes, and coded for at what point in the program the comment was made (pre/mid/end or focus group). After a few rounds of coding, these were refined and final codes were determined. Any data that did not fit a code was given the code 'OTHER' and those were sorted to determine additional codes. The analysis focused on overall changes over the program span (rather than individual changes) and outcome-based findings.

The qualitative pre/mid/post data allowed for an understanding of general themes in participant changes over the span of the program. These findings were consistent across the cohorts in the program, and so findings were aggregated across the program cycles<sup>8</sup>. Qualitative outcomes were most evident at the program end (after placement), although outcomes had already emerged by mid-program (after kitchen portion) for some participants as well.

The main qualitative outcome findings are grouped under the themes of Employment Readiness; General Wellbeing; and, Food in Everyday Life.

## Process evaluation

Although we focused on program outcomes, we also collected **process evaluation data** (performance metrics/quality/outputs) for both programs. Process data were designed to help us monitor program quality, improve and refine the program, and capture lessons learned.

To assess and guide the implementation of the CTY program, we monitored six areas of process quality:

1. Culinary skills training quality (culinary skills training models appropriate professional behaviour)
2. Employment skills training quality (employment skills training models appropriate professional behaviour)
3. Program fidelity and quality (intervention is implemented as planned; high quality intervention)
4. Program outputs (intervention project is implemented as planned)
5. Program outreach (effective marketing and outreach outcomes)
6. Evaluation quality (high-quality evaluation embedded in project delivery)

### Culinary and employment skills training quality

The quality of training was reviewed during program delivery through a standardized training rubric and curriculum checklist of skills covered, review by the program manager, and placement partner feedback.

### Program fidelity, quality, and outputs

The fidelity and quality of the CTY intervention was monitored and reviewed by the program manager using a performance measurement plan, through oversight in monthly meetings with Director of Programs and Director of Finance and Operations at CFSPD, and through participant survey feedback, and reflection and focus group responses from steering committee members.

Program outputs were also used to track and guide project implementation. These included monitoring project partnerships (steering committee attendance and membership), culinary and employability training work (# hours in class instruction, # employers engaged for job placements, # and types of placements secured, and participant numbers at program milestones:

- # of CTY and control participants recruited (and demographics)
- # CTY participants who complete in-kitchen training (with volunteer hours, social enterprise, smart serve completed)
- # CTY participants who complete placements

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<sup>8</sup> Where there were qualitative differences across cohorts, they are noted in the findings.

The program tracked 1:1 support from youth advocate (time & #/type referrals). In addition, staff reported on how the program is adapting to meet participant needs (e.g., hands on supports for mental health and crisis intervention, on-site resume preparation tech support, childcare and transportation). Summaries of these findings were documented and shared through the project steering committee meetings.

### Program outreach

Program outreach (marketing and outreach outcomes) was tracked through metrics included the number of participants recruited in each cohort, as well as the number of outreach and recruitment events, and social media engagement.

### Evaluation quality

Evaluation quality was tracked to ensure that high quality evaluative processes were embedded in project delivery. This included monitoring of evaluation outputs, as well as ongoing data entry and qualitative analysis, and training and coordination among research assistant and instructors with research partners.



# Evaluation Results

## Participant Sample and Demographics

Overall, 190 youth enrolled in the CTY program

Of the 190 participants enrolled in the CTY program from 2016-2018. Of these participants, 67% went on to complete the in-kitchen and employment training program. The in-kitchen graduation rate varied from 33% to 88% across the 15 cohorts.

After the in-kitchen training, participants went on to complete a hands-on job placement at a local restaurant or food service organization. Of participants who completed the in-kitchen part of the program, 58% went on to complete the placement and graduated the entire CTY program. Of participants who completed their placement, 88% were employed at program exit.

CTY Intervention Stage	n	
Total enrolled (15 cohorts)	190	
Completed CTY In-Kitchen	127	→ 67% of participants enrolled completed the in-kitchen training
Completed placement	74	→ 58% of in-kitchen graduates (39% of starting cohorts) completed the placement
Employed at program end	65	→ 88% of placement graduates were employed at program exit

### Evaluation sample sizes decreased as the program progressed

We planned for and recruited a relatively robust sample size<sup>9</sup>, although there was an attrition effect as the program progressed. Overall, 159 CTY participants and 82 food skills participants took part in the project evaluation.

Due to attrition and incomplete participation in evaluation activities, the evaluation sample size decreased at the end of the in-kitchen training, after the placement, and most markedly at the 6-month follow-up. See details in the table below.

Note that participant attrition means the results are positively biased, such that participants with positive outcomes were more likely to stay in the program and keep providing evaluation data.

Evaluation stage	CTY	FS Control
Program start	159	82
Mid-point (after in-kitchen training)	105	--
End (after placement)	63	57
6-Month follow-up	23	--

<sup>9</sup> Our initial goal was 150 participants in each group (300 total), not accounting for attrition. We succeeded in recruiting a sample of 241 at program start, and 120 at program end. This sample size was sufficient for our quantitative analysis. However, these findings should be replicated and verified with future research.

## Demographics of CTY and FS control groups

Based on the demographics collected at the program start, the CTY group successfully recruited youth from low-income families<sup>10</sup>. As shown in the table below, the FS control group was younger than the CTY group, and may have represented higher income families. However, both groups represented diverse ethnocultural backgrounds, and similar gender ratios.

CTY Intervention Group Demographics (n=159)	Food Skills Control Group Demographics (n=82)
<b>Age: CTY participants were older than FS control group members.</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CTY participants ranged in age from 16 to 29. 62% were aged 12-24, and 38% from 25-34. The average age was 23.2 years (SD = 3.4 years).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most FS control group participants (87%) were aged 12-17. The remaining 12% were aged 18-24.</li> </ul>
<b>Immigrant and Newcomer Status: More newcomers among the CTY group.</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>26% of the CTY group reported being born outside Canada (n=41 participants). Of these:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>25% were newcomers, and had arrived in Canada from 2015-2018</li> <li>36% arrived from 2005-2014</li> <li>42% arrived before 2005</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>33% of the FS control group were born outside of Canada (n=26 participants). Of these:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>n&lt;5 were newcomers, and had arrived in Canada from 2015-2018</li> <li>64% arrived from 2000-2018</li> <li>36% arrived before 2005</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Ethnocultural Background: Both programs represent diverse backgrounds, with some differences.</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CTY participants represented diverse minority and racialized communities, with 48 different ethnocultural backgrounds identified.</li> <li>Among CTY participants, 25% identified as black-Caribbean, 21% identified as white, 14% mixed heritage, 6% Filipino, and 5% South Asian and Latin American. All other ethnic groups were n&lt;5.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FS participants also represented diverse minority and racialized communities, with 23 different ethnocultural backgrounds identified.</li> <li>Among FS control participants, 44% identified as South Asian, 11% Black-Caribbean, 11% white, 9% Black-African, and 7% Chinese. All other ethnic groups were n&lt;5.</li> </ul>
<b>Gender: CTY participants had a more even gender split, but FS tended to attract more female participants.</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The CTY group identified as 57% female and 40% male gender. All others represented n&lt;5.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The FS control group identified as 68% female and 23% male gender. All others represented n&lt;5.</li> </ul>
<b>Family Income: More CTY participants reported families with low incomes, as compared to FS group.</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>64 CTY participants reported a family income. Of these participants:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>70% had a family income from \$0 to \$29999</li> <li>8% from \$30-39k</li> <li>11% from \$40-59k</li> <li>11% had incomes greater than \$60k</li> </ul> </li> <li>69 participants did not know their family income</li> <li>26 participants preferred not to answer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only 10 FS control participants reported a family income. Specific frequencies are too small to report (n&lt;5), but the median family income was \$40-59k.</li> <li>58 participants did not know their family income</li> <li>13 participants preferred not to answer</li> </ul>

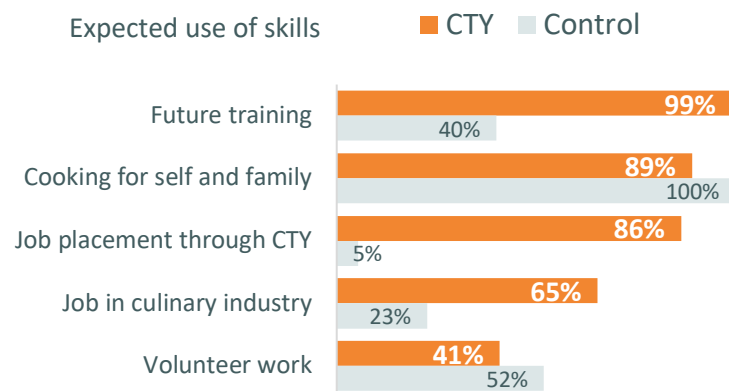
<sup>10</sup> More details on CTY program recruitment and outreach are provided under the process evaluation results.

## Outcome Evaluation Findings: What Changed for Youth

### Expectations about training benefits changed over the program

At the program start survey, participants' expectations were focused on the practical culinary and kitchen skills they were hoping to gain from the program. These included knife skills, food handling, prepping and cooking. Participants were also interested in increasing their general food knowledge and understanding.

At the program start, most of the CTY group expected to use program skills for future training. About two thirds expected to use program skills in culinary industry jobs.



*"I expect my range in culinary variety and my [palate] will improve greatly." (CTY Participant)*

At the program start point, participants expressed desire for training and readiness specific to employment, and were seeking clarity about what a job in the culinary industry entails. For example, one participant stated, *"I think this program will get me ready for culinary school"*, while another wanted to *"... truly learn if the Culinary Industry is my path."* Many participants hoped that the program would lead to *"Having a job"*.

At the program start, there were only a few participants who were looking for better social connectedness, and/or for what can broadly be defined as an increase in 'wellbeing'. These benefits of program participation emerged over the program, including social connectedness, using food knowledge in everyday life, and softer skills that are needed for employability.

By the program mid-point survey, a more complex picture emerges of the benefits of the program. Participants still focused on practical benefits of the program (skilling and employment readiness) but also on the less tangible benefits of the program, including aspects of wellness and translating what they learned in the program to their everyday lives.

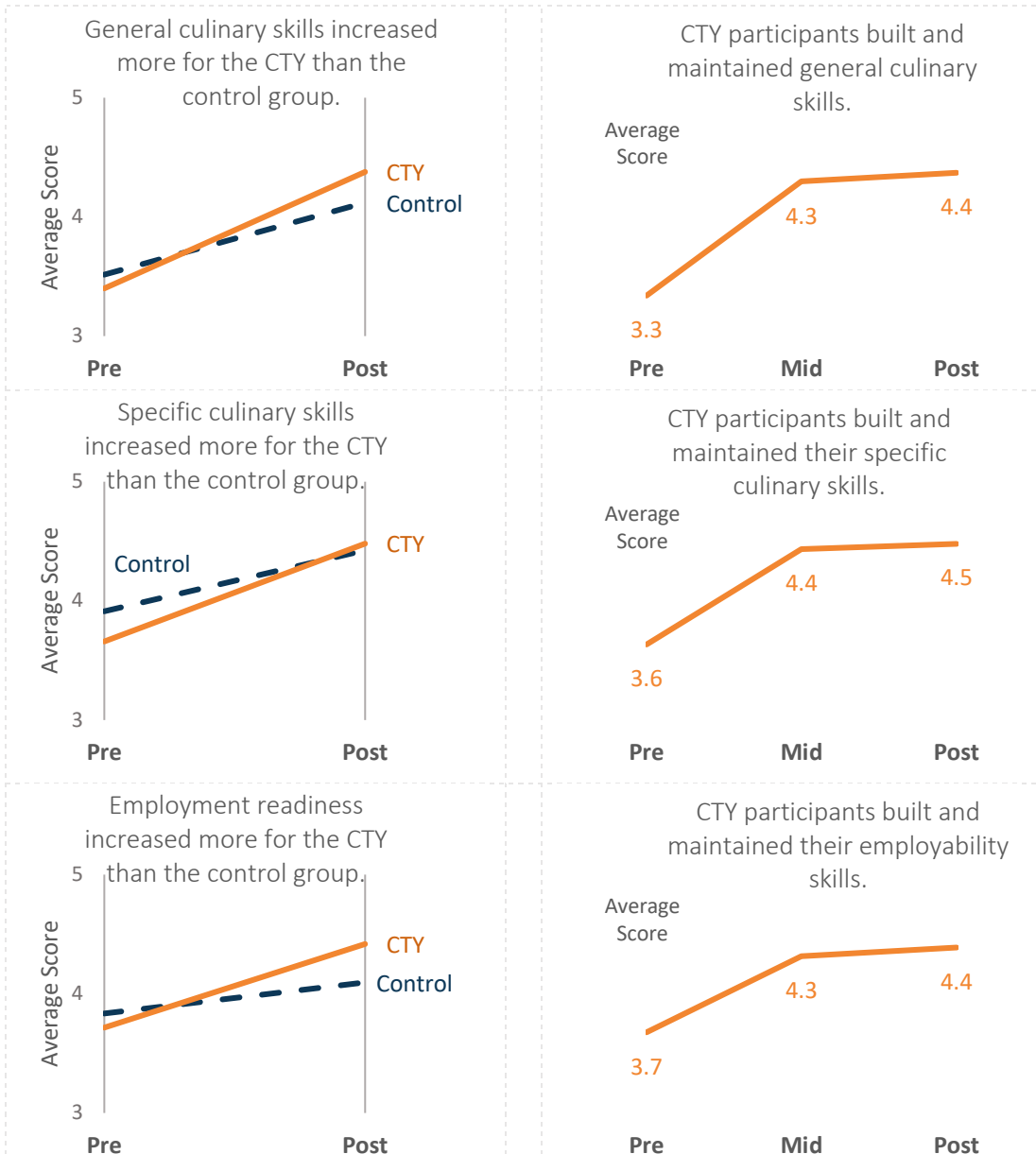
### Quantitative outcome measures show improvement over the program

Statistical analysis was used to compare and contrast quantitative outcome scores at program start and end from the CTY intervention group (n=60) and FS control group (n=53). Analysis details and descriptive statistics are provided in Appendix C.

#### ***Improved general and specific culinary skills and employment readiness for CTY participants***

Both CTY and FS groups increased overall from before to after the program on outcome variables of general culinary skills, specific culinary skills, informal skills, employment readiness, and self-confidence. This shows that, overall, both programs had a positive impact on participant knowledge and skills.



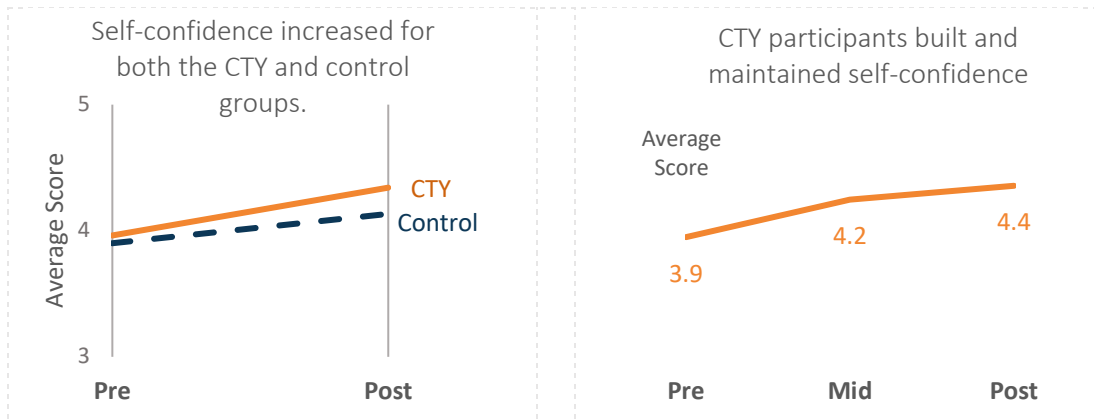


There was also an impact of program type, such that CTY participants showed more improvement on key outcome variables of culinary and employment skills, as compared to the FS control group. Before the program, there was no evidence of a difference between the CTY and FS groups in knowledge of general culinary skills, specific culinary skills, or employment readiness. However, after the program, the CTY group showed significantly higher general culinary skills and employment readiness skills. This suggests that, as expected, the CTY program led to greater improvements in culinary and employment readiness skills, as compared to the general food skills education program.

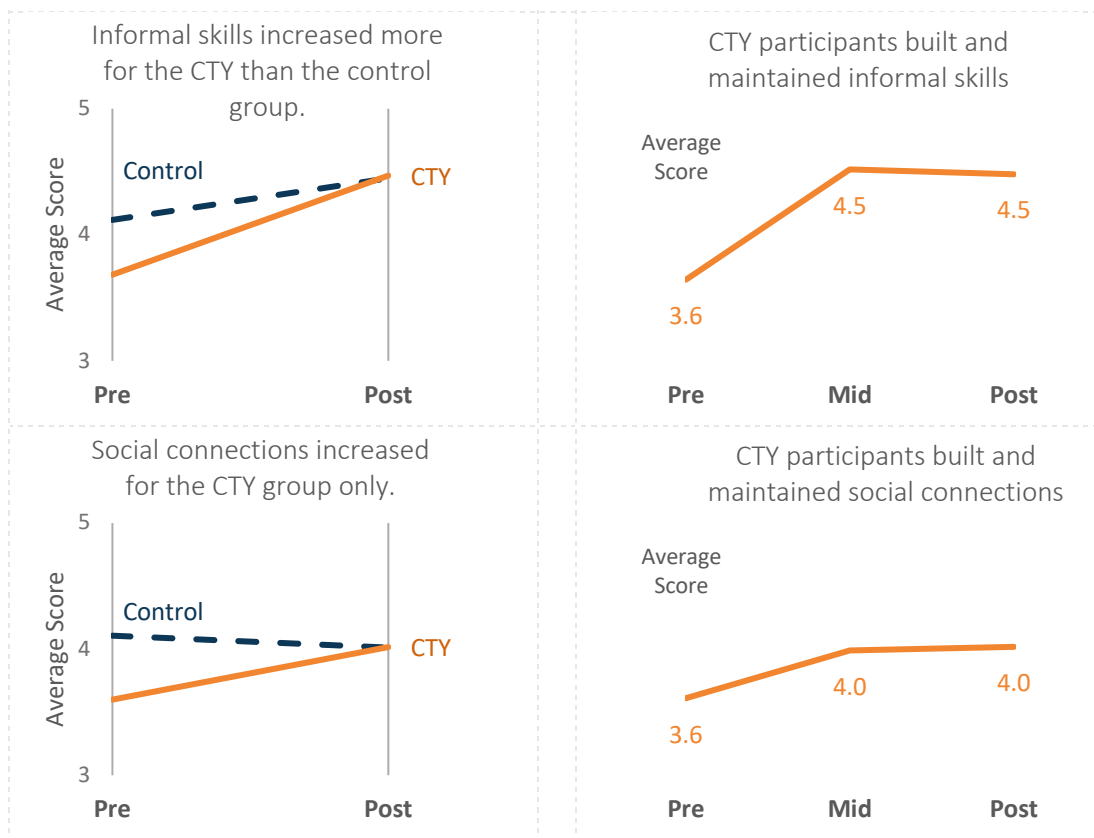
When examined at the start, middle, and end-point of the CTY program, the in-kitchen class component is where participants built general and specific culinary skills, and employment skills. Then, these skills were maintained during the placement portion of the program.

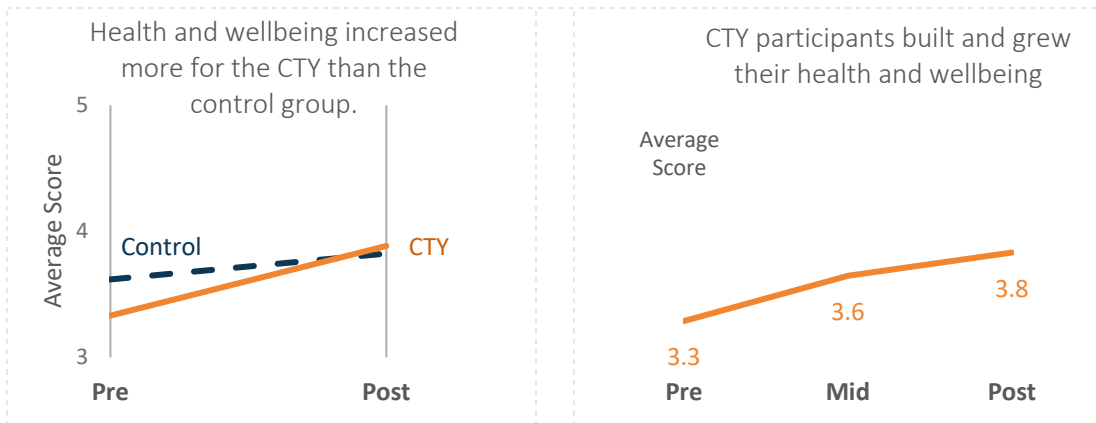
**Improved informal skills, self-confidence, social connections, and wellbeing for CTY participants**

The in-kitchen class component is also where participants built increased their informal skills, self-confidence, social connections, and wellbeing. Measured quantitatively, participants maintained these gains from the in-kitchen class after the placement portion of the program.



We also found that at the program start, the CTY group had significantly lower informal skills, social connections, and health/wellbeing, as compared to the FS control group. At program end, informal skills, food access, social connections, and health had increased for the CTY group, and there was no longer any evidence of a significant difference between the two groups for these variables. This suggests that the program improved risk factors related to informal skills, food access, social connections, and health/wellbeing.

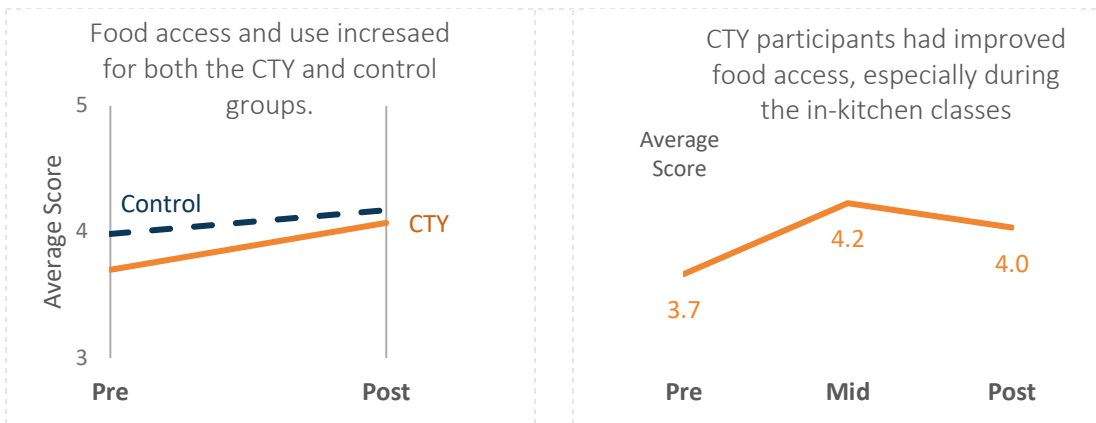




There were post-placement improvements in overall health and wellbeing, beyond those reported during the in-kitchen program midpoint. This suggests that wellbeing gains were being sustained and expanded through the entire program. However, for youth from a lower risk profile (food skills group), the control group intervention did not have a substantial impact on social connections or health/wellbeing.

**Improved healthy food access for CTY and FS participants**

Overall, food access and use increased for both groups. However, it appears that this improved food access may have been partly due to working in a training kitchen, as food access trended down for the CTY group during the placement period.



Overall, the quantitative analysis of program outcome measures showed the CTY program improved culinary skills and employability more than the control program, and improved risk-factor outcomes for participants to end up similar to youth in the low risk control group.

The following sections detail qualitative findings about participant outcomes related to employment readiness, wellbeing, and food use.

**Qualitative outcome details: Employment readiness**

Qualitative findings related to employment readiness can be separated into gaining certification and training, as well as skills, knowledge and habits, that make youth more employable, and also having motivations and confidence to pursue a career in the culinary field.

### ***Employment Skills and Habits***

Youth identified a range of both skills and habits that they had learned or improved on in this program. Some of the skills and habits are specifically related to culinary jobs, while other skills and habits will transfer to other types of jobs. Participants commented on a wide variety of skills, habits and certifications that were meaningful to them and that will be useful in future employment. These included:

#### **Skills and Habits for Culinary Jobs:**

- Following directions in the kitchen
- Knife Skills
- Reading recipes
- Plating Foods
- Preparation in the Kitchen
- Being part of a team in the kitchen
- Multiple techniques for food preparation
- Use of kitchen machinery
- Professional terminology
- Food Handling
- Food Costing

#### **CTY Participant Quotes**

*“I was able to feel more comfortable with kitchen tools and machinery, and better feel like I was qualified to work in a kitchen.”*

*“My biggest improvement since commencing the program was the way I've cooked, plated, and presented the meals.”*

*“I had no knife skills whatsoever and now they are awesome. “*

*“knowledge of handling food. Proper preparation of food. Knife skills. Food cost control. Being a team player in a fast-paced environment.”*

#### **General Employment Skills and Habits:**

- Follow Directions
- Work as part of a Team
- Be on-time
- Attention to detail
- Stronger work ethic
- Following Instructions
- Organization
- Communication
- Initiative
- Receiving feedback better

#### **CTY Participant Quotes**

*“The improvement ... is team work and being on time have improvement (sic).”*

*“I am more confident working in a big kitchen, and I have more experience working with people from all walks of life. I am more willing to take on responsibility & initiative that I was early on, as I would wait to be told what to do a lot of the time.”*

### ***Certification and Training***

Youth noted the value of the certification (Smart Serve, Food Handling) and training available through this program. Specifically, various youth mentioned that receiving the food handling and smart serve certifications at no cost to them was valuable for future employment.

Training included the program with John Howard Society that provided resume, job finding and interview skills. The one difference across program cycles is that those in the beginning cycles did not connect well with the program administrator, which impacted their outcomes regarding resume writing, job seeking and interviewing. In later cycles, with a change in the administrator, youth had positive outcomes, and felt prepared to apply for jobs, and were connected to job placements.

### ***Knowledge About Work and School Expectations***

Youth also discussed an increase in knowledge about the workforce expectations, and how their skills and habits will help them in future work and training/education. This was both in the culinary field and in general.

### ***Motivation and Goals for Employment***

Some motivation was shown by the youth for actually showing up and participating in the program (until completion), as well as their enthusiasm for completing their volunteer hours (with some youth going beyond the requisite number of hours).

Beyond providing skills and habits that increase employability, some youth stated that this program provided motivation and goals for their future employment goals in the culinary industry.

The program also gave youth confidence in their qualifications and ability to gain and keep employment, and connections to job placements.

### ***Control Group Employment Readiness***

The Food Skill program youth were younger and many had not had a job before. They were also not intending to go into the culinary field necessarily, and did not identify skills learned that were specific to the culinary field as being useful to gaining employment.

Control group participants did note the benefits of the experience of being in a commercial kitchen, learning basic knife skills (chopping and mincing) and reading recipes. They were less able to identify what skills they learned that were transferrable to any type of future employment. However, they reported some employment readiness skills and habits, such as: following instructions, teamwork, time management, initiative, punctuality, appropriate attire, leadership, and communication.

### **Qualitative outcome details: Wellbeing**

The theme of wellbeing includes increases social connections, confidence, and mental health. Although these aspects of wellbeing were often related to the program and future employment prospects (as noted above in the employment section, under motivation/goals), there is evidence that the program led to overall increases in wellbeing.

### **CTY Participant Quotes**

*"This program helps you to know what it's like out there in the field of work- what to do and what not to do..."*

*"If you were thinking of going to George Brown or Humber, it would give you taste of what to expect."*

### **CTY Participant Quotes**

*"I found a new calling in the kitchen. Helped me realize what I want out of life and what to do with it."*

*"It... helped with my passion and career in the industry."*

*"I had no motivation, now I have goals and plans."*

*"I feel like my life has a route and this program has opened doors for me in this country to be able to work and be independent, be more professional and confident as well as skilled."*

*"I was able to feel more comfortable with kitchen tools and machinery, and better feel like I was qualified to work in a kitchen."*

*"It gave me a career."*

*"It helped me gain access in a placement I probably would have not applied for on my own."*

### **CTY Participant Quotes**

*"I'd have to say my biggest improvement is my self-esteem has improved..."*

*"I believe in myself more and my full potential!"*

*"Being in this program has given me more confidence and now I'm more outgoing."*

*"After doing this program I realised my confidence in myself grew."*

*"[On the] first day, I was really nervous and shy because I never knew anyone before getting along with them.... [I] feel confident and comfortable with them."*

*"I feel ten times more confident...thanks to this program"*

*"I have more self-worth"*

### ***Confidence and Self-Esteem***

Participants demonstrated increased confidence while progressing through the program. At the end of the program, many participants described a positive change in their confidence, both in the kitchen, and also more generally in life. Changes included being more willing to take risks or try new experiences, trusting themselves, and for one participant, 'braveness'.

### ***Belonging and social connection***

In each cohort, youth discussed a feeling of belonging to the group, increasing their social connections and supports. This was especially important to youth who had a difficult home life, felt isolated, or who were new to the country or city.

### ***Mental Health and Wellbeing***

Participants noted an improvement in their stress, mental health, and wellbeing due to this program. The reasons for this improvement were attributed to various reasons, including the social interactions through the program, the feeling of being productive, having a safe place to go to each day, getting referrals to counselors, and for one participant, the actual act of cooking.

### ***Control Group Wellbeing***

The food skills program participants noted positive social and wellbeing aspects, including increased confidence, meeting new people and the friendships formed. However, there was no mention of mental health changes by the participants, potentially because of their age and the demographic that this program was geared towards (i.e., not at-risk youth).

## **Qualitative outcome details: Food in everyday life**

The third main grouping of topics can be categorized under the umbrella of 'food in everyday life' - that is, outcomes related to increases in food knowledge, healthy eating and increased food security.

### ***Healthy Eating***

The youth noted that they ate healthier on the days they were at the program making food, and when at home with family. This included an increase vegetable consumption, and making items from scratch.

### **CTY Participant Quotes**

*"Personally, I did this program to get me out of a "slump". I wasn't in a good place in my life and this program made me go and do something productive every day until I finally got the job I have now which is teaching me proper work ethic. Although my depression is still present it has gotten a lot better since starting this program."*

*"I'm much more confident speaking to people. Helped my mental health."*

*"I became more patient waiting and become more of a people person... personally I think that cooking has become a major stress relief. Not sure if I will always make it my get away but I'll damn sure try to. "*

*" I feel more positive, I was really down and negative... I have a positive spirit."*

*"Talking to [youth facilitator] helped me with my confidence and to deal with issues, and I actually connected with a counsellor; I'm seeing them [this week]."*

*"[the best part of the program was]... the activities we had – the meditation we had in the norming, not trying to stress us out too much - it helps."*

### **CTY Participant Quotes**

*"I feel like there's a lot more support in my life. Even though we're still not in the program, we can still come here for support." (post-program)*

*"I feel like I belong."*

*"I didn't know anybody. I just moved to Brampton. It was good to get to know people."*

*"I'm new to Canada, I didn't have any friends, this group is my new best friends."*

*"I was pretty isolated at the time, I was in a little shell like a hermit, and it was an opportunity to be forced into interaction with other people than my partner."*

*“If I feel like to eat healthy that day” (when at the program)*

*“learning how to make or bake foods from scratch. Eating healthy knowing what your putting into our bodies, and it is easy, fun and always good to cook your own food.”*

*“I have more interest in cook and a better look on how everything falls together for on flavour (sic) and look.”*

*“I feel like I’m more food conscious, like the whole process behind, and it kind of gives you a better idea what to look for.”*

*“I don’t like healthy food, but I don’t eat out any more, I make the food myself now. But even if you’re frying things, if you make it yourself, you know what goes in it.”*

*“I eat a lot more greens now, I’m trying to cut out the red meat.”*

### **Eating and Family**

There was also a ‘spillover’ effect for some youth into their families, where family members benefitted from the youth’s positive healthy eating changes.

*“I am more helpful at home when it comes to being in the kitchen.”*

*“My cooking methods have changed, I’ll actually take time to sauté vegetables, and my sister is picking up some of my habits. “*

*“pretty much help me improve my healthy eating – I don’t really buy fast food more often, it’s because a little after the program, I would make food for my brother and parents.”*

*“For me, I can say I take the time to prepare meals and cooking for my family.”*

### **Safe Eating**

Youth used their new knowledge of food handling and safety to make safer choices in their everyday lives.

*“This chicken can’t be on top of this milk.”*

*“I have to organize the whole fridge by myself. There’s two parts of the fridge.”*

### **Food Security**

Although changes in food security were not widely discussed, and it cannot be concluded that this program impacts food security, there were some indications that participation in the program could help ensure food security for the youth.

Mentions of understanding food budgeting, eating in and saving money, and being able to make things from scratch, as well as the spill over into families may lead to an increase in food security for families. This is an aspect that requires further study, to understand the actual impact on food security of youth and their families (dependents and family units).

*“The variety of different food that was made will also help me to cook more at home to save money for my future.”*

### **Control Group Food Knowledge and Use**

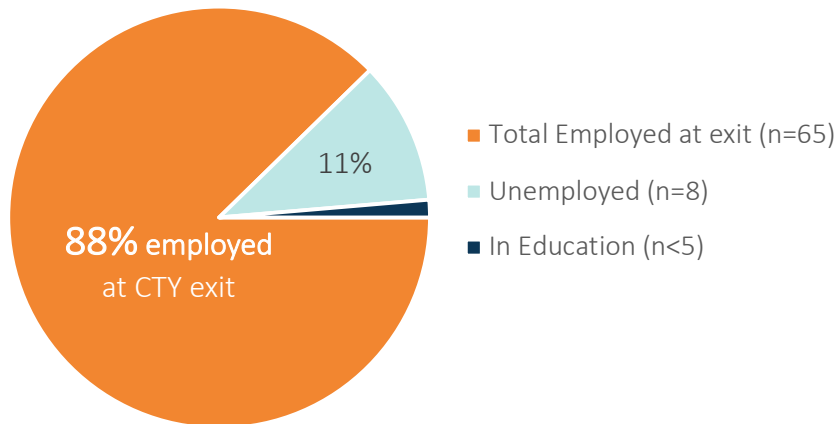
The Food Skills education program youth had similar results about food knowledge and healthy eating. Youth mentioned an increase in cooking at home and eating healthier. There was also a focus on the exposure to different ethnic cuisines, which was not mentioned often with the Culinary Program for Youth cohort.

The Food Skills group did not have any mention of impacts to food security, although this group did have an individual who requested to learn more about food insecurity.

### Program graduates had 88% employment rate, but low cohort numbers

Of the graduating cohort of participants of 74 participants, 65 (88%) were employed at the end of the program (41% noted as “employed”, 24% as “employed full time” and 23% as “employed part time”. Within the graduating cohort, 11% (n=8) were unemployed at program exit.

88% of CTY participants who completed the placement were employed full or part time at program exit

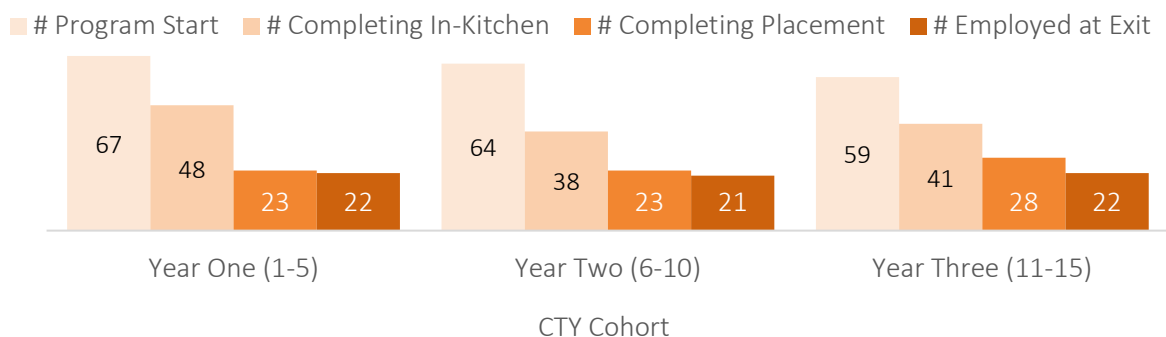


### A majority of participants enrolled did not complete the placement, but retention improved with program delivery experience

The employment results for graduating participants are promising, but the number of participants completing the program was lower than expected. On average, the graduating class size was 5 participants (n=74 across all 15 cohorts of the CTY program). Thus, only about 39% of the 190 participants who initially enrolled in the CTY program continued all the way to completion.

Over the three-year course of the CTY program, participant retention through the end of placement increased. The proportion of participants retained through placement increased from 34% in the first year to 47% (n=28) in the final year of the program. Similarly, the proportion of participants who were employed at program end increased from 33% in the first two years of the program to 37% in the year of the program.

### Participant retention at program exit increased by the final year of CTY.





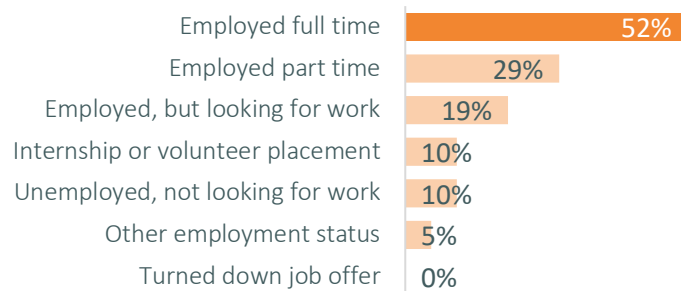
## Post-placement follow-up shows promising but limited results

To find out about the longer-term impacts of the CTY program, follow-ups with participants about their employment and education status were attempted after 3 and 6 months (via John Howard) and at 6 months (via CTY research assistant)<sup>11</sup>. The follow-up sample in both cases was very limited. The CTY team was only able to contact 21 of 74 graduates at the 6-month mark<sup>12</sup>. This means these follow-up results are unlikely to fully represent outcomes from the larger group of participants, and could not be compared to regional employment data. However, the follow-up does provide a snapshot of outcomes for the most engaged participants.

### ***Most participants contacted at follow-up were employed, but not in education***

At follow-up, a third of participants contacted (33%,  $n=7$ ) were still with their placements. Overall, 81% of CTY participants contacted were working full or part time at the six-month follow-up. Almost a fifth were employed but looking for work, and 10% were unemployed, and 10% were engaged in volunteer or internship placements.

81% of CTY participants contacted at follow-up were working full or part time



At follow-up CTY participants reported working as cooks, line cooks, and other food service positions. A few participants reported having gained supervisor or manager positions.

### **CTY jobs at follow-up included:**

*cafeteria clerk*  
*catering: bartending, serving, kitchen prep.*  
*cook*

*cook everything*  
*line cook*  
*line cook; in training for supervisor*

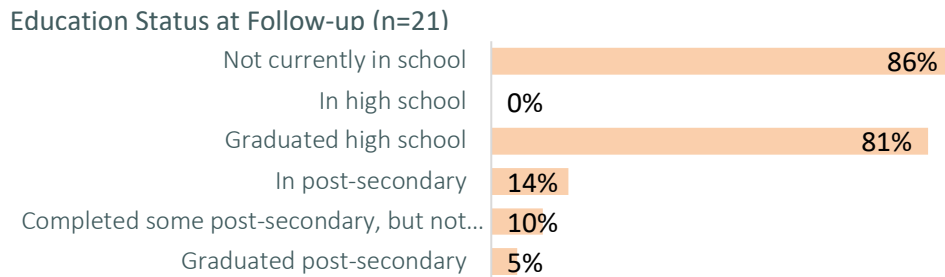
*manager*  
*night shift: kitchen close*  
*pantry and prep cook; soon front-line chef training*

Most CTY participants (86%) were not in education at follow-up, while 14% were enrolled in post-secondary education. Of the CTY participants, 81% had graduated high-school, and 24% had completed some post-secondary, and 5% had graduated from a post-secondary program.

<sup>11</sup> The research assistant contacted all participants who completed the in-kitchen part of the CTY program.

<sup>12</sup> The John Howard numbers were  $n=15$  at 3-month follow-up and  $n=11$  at 6-month follow-up. Of participants who were contacted by John Howard, 93% were employed 3-months after the program, and 82% were employed 6 months after the program.

Most CTY participants (86%) were not in education at follow-up.



It’s likely that these positive findings represent a bias in results, such that the most successful participants were more likely to respond to follow-up requests. However, these results do suggest that the program was successful at improving employment for some participants. In addition, a proportion of program participants appear to be pursuing additional education.

## Process Evaluation: What We Learned About Program Delivery

The following section reviews our process evaluation findings, and what we learned about how to provide high quality culinary training to at-risk youth.

### Overall the CTY program provided high quality training and services

Based on participant survey feedback, the CTY program delivered high quality and helpful training with skilled instructors. Most participants at the end of kitchen survey (96%) agreed they would recommend the program to others.

CTY participants (n=81) report helpful and high quality services.



Ongoing areas for improvement included making the program information clear and easy to understand, serving all participants in ways sensitive to their life circumstances, and helping participants connect with needed services. However, the majority of the participants experience in the CTY program was positive.

## How and why program delivery changed during the CTY initiative

### ***Program fidelity requires flexibility***

The CTY program was delivered in a learning environment: program partners regularly met to review how things were going, troubleshoot, and “course correct” as needed. Rather than a static program, the CTY program was adjusted from cohort to cohort as promising practices emerged. The rationale for CTY program changes are documented in this section.

The strategy of monitoring the fidelity and quality of the CTY intervention through layers of collaborative oversight by the program manager, partner management, and the steering committee allowed the project to respond quickly to trends like low recruitment or program attrition. This meant that while the general intervention activities were implemented as planned, there were adjustments to the ways in which the program was delivered. As described above, this meant making the program more interactive and engaging, and minimizing the “one-way lecture” sessions. This also meant finding ways to address the diverse barriers to program completion, while ensure consistency and equity in how program rules were applied.

Similarly, tracking program outputs around project partnerships training and staff contributions allowed the project to adapt its’ use of limited resources to better meet the needs of participants. For example, the youth advocate designed workshops to address psychosocial needs in a group format, to supplement and enhance 1:1 support. The youth advocate also obtained donations from local private sector partners to create hygiene and grooming “power packs” for youth and an interview “clothing closet” for program participants.

### ***Culinary and employment skills training adjusted to improve accessibility and engagement***

Culinary training quality was delivered in a way that met the criteria described in the standardized training rubric and curriculum. Adjustments to the curriculum during the program based on participant feedback included making the lessons easier to understand, with content that was shorter and more accessible and clear language. In addition, more physical practice was added to the kitchen curriculum based on participant suggestions.

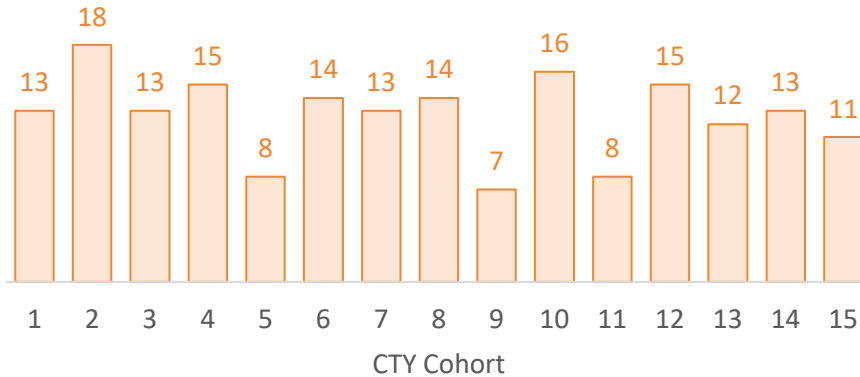
The employment training was delivered in a way that met the criteria described in the standardized training rubric and curriculum. The employment curriculum was also substantially updated based on feedback from participants. In particular, changes included making the training more active, with more time devoted to interview skills and practice.

### ***Program outreach and intake screening was the key to participant “fit”***

Overall, the CTY program works well when staff are able to recruit the right people with the right capacity: intake is key. Over the course of the CTY program, the intake screening became more intensive. At the same time, outreach and recruitment has required ongoing effort and developing targeted ways to provide information to potential participants.

On average, 12 participants were enrolled in each CTY cohort, but the number varied from 7 to 18. This was due to differences across cohorts in recruitment strategies.

### Program enrolment varied across cohorts



Recruitment and outreach for the CTY program required educating potential participants about what they could gain in the program, and finding participants who had an interest in culinary and food service career and education options. At the same time, successful recruitment meant finding a “match” in terms of motivation and capacity. Participants needed to be interested in culinary training, but not currently working or in school. In addition, participants’ life circumstances and stage of poverty needed to be such that their basic needs for shelter were met, and they had the mental and physical capacity to participate in a full-time training program.

Successful strategies for participant recruitment included:

1. Putting up posters and signs where youth congregate, especially newcomer youth and recent high school graduates.
2. Building referral networks among service provider partners serving the target population (e.g., newcomer youth)
3. Creating brochures summarizing the benefits and what to expect (free culinary skills program, focus on certifications, social support and personal development, testimonials from former participants)
4. Holding an information session highlighting the benefits of participation and what to expect, and how the program can address barriers to participation (e.g., transportation support, childcare at CFSPD)
5. Detailed intake screening to assess participant capacity and provide a potential referral to counselling and other needed services (e.g., recent life changes, stressful events, trauma and mental health, substance misuse and addiction, thoughts of harming self or others) – see Intake in Appendix D.

Tracking program outreach through metrics, as well as reflection on what was working and not working, helped CTY staff tailor their approach over time.

### *Program outreach for placement site employers required ongoing effort*

Similar to participant recruitment, outreach and advertisement for employers took sustained effort. Employers needed to see the benefits of participation, and understand what would be required as a placement host. Effective strategies included ongoing network development and relationship building with potential employers, and developing a clear language one-page handout highlighting the benefits of participation.

### *Evaluation quality ensured through pilot testing and ongoing collaboration*

To ensure that evaluation materials were as easy to use and complete as possible, they were pilot tested with the first few cohorts of the CTY and FS programs. Based on those pilot test results, the survey formats were simplified and shortened.

Focus group were conducted by the research assistant and program staff, with support from the evaluation team. Focus group and survey delivery training and troubleshooting was provided via online training, and through steering committee meetings.

## Lessons learned from the CTY interventions

### *Building a recruitment network takes time*

Word of mouth outreach through agency partners was slow to start, and expanded over time. Recruitment became somewhat easier as the program progressed. Agency partners gained awareness of the program, especially those working near the Good Food Brampton kitchen<sup>13</sup>. Participants provided testimonials and word-of-mouth referrals to peers, as well as some youth “champions” who participated in recruitment events.

### *Not all placements lead to positive results*

While some participants were employed by their placement at program-end, not all employers saw benefit from participant placements. While repeated employers were highly valued among program staff, there was a potential to burn bridges as well as forge new connections through participant placements. Employers who did not have positive placement experiences were not likely to sign up for a second participant. Similarly, not all participants had a positive placement experience, which led to some attrition from the program.

## Culinary Job Grant for Employers

Work with **practicum students** from Good Food Brampton's Culinary Training for Youth Program.

Employers receive **subsidized wages** during an 8-week practicum placement.

Students are **ready for culinary work:**

- certified smart-serve or food handling certificate;
- completed culinary skills and employment training;
- appropriate clothing (safety shoes, jacket).

Employer needs matched with **pre-screened** students.

Students receive **ongoing support** through placement.

### Employer benefits:

- Lower advertising and recruitment costs
- Reduce administration time
- Maximized profits

### Eligibility:

- Located in Peel region;
- Maintain appropriate WSIB or alternate workplace safety insurance coverage.



To learn more, contact Tom Gancarz | Community Kitchen Manager

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Supported by:



<sup>13</sup> CTY participants provided food services and regular lunch catering to the building. This increased partner agency awareness as well as building participant skills.

### ***Program needs to attend to different stages of poverty and intersectional issues among participants***

Participants entered the program at different stages of poverty and with intersectional issues. For example, some participants were experiencing homelessness or food insecurity. Others were dealing with more severe trauma and mental health concerns, or experienced acute mental health crises during the program. Lessons learned included that participants needed somewhere to live (an address for getting work) and access to basic hygiene supports in order to be enrolled in the culinary training and placement. If youth were experiencing a stage of poverty that required housing stability as a priority, then they were connected with appropriate housing services, and had the opportunity to re-enrol in future cohorts of the CTY program. Staff worked to build rapport with individual youth to understand where additional supports were needed, and where they had resources and capacity for personal growth and development.

### ***There are language barriers for written certification and kitchen communication***

For some participants, language is a barrier for written Smart Serve or Food Handling certification, even if verbal communication in the kitchen is not an issue. These participants may need additional support or translation services. Meeting the needs of newcomer participants means ensuring they have the language capacity to communicate verbally in the kitchen, but also supporting their capacity to complete written assessments.

### ***There are tensions between individual and group needs***

In a few cohorts, there were consistent participant comments about how the group functioned together. In these cases, one or more individuals was impacting the rest of the group's ability to learn and complete course requirements. These comments spoke both to the impact on the group working together and to the ability of group members to learn individually. For example, participants found that their peers could impede their individual progress:

*“Did not appreciate other participant's incompetence impeding my own progress and enjoyment at times.”*

Suggestions on how to deal with this ranged from a better screening for program entry, to better management of a range of participant skills by the Chef.

*“I feel like you should interview people before accepting them in the program to know what their motives are and if they are really passionate and willing to learn everything about the kitchen.”*

### ***Managing participant expectations enables program retention and completion***

Not all participants were a good fit for culinary training. A lesson learned is that managing expectations and careful screening is vitally important for program retention and completion. Before the program started, an information session was an important tool in recruiting participants who wanted to be there, and screening identified participants who had capacity to commit to the training period. See the intake tool in Appendix D.

*The intake screening involves identifying “what supports do you need, are you ready for this cycle, do you need to postpone to a later cycle? Are you really ready, are you going to be properly supported?” (Youth Advocate)*

When participants were at risk of not meeting course requirements (attendance, skills test, etc.) and having to withdraw from the course, communication of expectations and next steps was important for remediation and retention or non-acrimonious withdrawal. In particular, staff found that a standardized “withdrawal letter” provided formal notice to participants about course requirements and next steps. See Appendix E for details.

The revised recruitment and intake screening strategy, combined with curriculum adjustments, resulted in improved enrolment and fewer dropouts of the course of the program.

### ***Staff mentorship and relationship building is crucial for program success***

Program staff are very important to participant success. In particular, the chef's relationship with participants and the employment liaison from John Howard have a substantial impact on participant engagement and retention.

During one program cycle there was a transition from one chef to a new one, the bond that participants had with their main chef was noticeable, as all participants wanted "their" chef back.

### ***Youth advocate position provided diverse supports and needed more hours***

The youth advocate position provided participants in the CTY program with information, ongoing and crisis support, and referral services<sup>14</sup>. Among participants, there was a general need for supports related to general wellbeing and self-care. Specific tailored individual supports and group supports to CTY participants included:

- Referrals to needed services (e.g., housing, mental health counselling, health services)
- Acute mental health intervention by peer support
- Creation of weekly "wellness group" meeting

Other supports included personalized goal-setting and coaching, and creation of a clothing closet for participant interviews, and creation of hygiene and grooming "power packs".

The youth advocate position was part-time, with 14 hours a week (two days) to provide support to program participants. Working days were chosen to be available to the youth during class time, as well as available before and after class. However, due to program demands, the youth advocate also had to be flexible and responsive. Managing time and schedule pressures was an ongoing challenge for staff in the youth advocate position.

### ***Recruiting and supporting at-risk youth participants takes considerable staff efforts***

In addition to time for recruitment and screening, staff found there was substantial work involved in providing ad hoc supports and interventions to individual participants. Management of outreach and dropouts was challenging for program staff. It required intensive interventions for participants, managing the individual needs of up to 30+ participants at once (those in-kitchen and in-placement), and recruiting and screening new cohorts of participants. Given the part time nature of CTY program staff's work, there was a risk of burnout for the staff involved.

### ***Staff turnover impacts program delivery***

There were changes in almost all staff positions (chef, employment liaison, youth advocate, research assistant) during the program delivery period. This had negative impacts on program engagement for participants who had built a relationship with a particular staff person. There were also impacts due to new staff having to learn the routines of day-to-day programming. However, staff turnover also had

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<sup>14</sup> The actions taken by the youth advocate were done in conjunction with participants, to assist the youth in the completion of the CTY program. The goal was to help address the youth's identified social factors that could deter them from completion. The youth advocate functioned as a connection between youth in the CTY program and service providers. Specifically, this position provided a method for youth in the CTY program to have their personal concerns heard to receive help in resolving those concerns. Youth advocate roles included engagement, support, voice, bridging and culture brokering, networking, and providing research support.

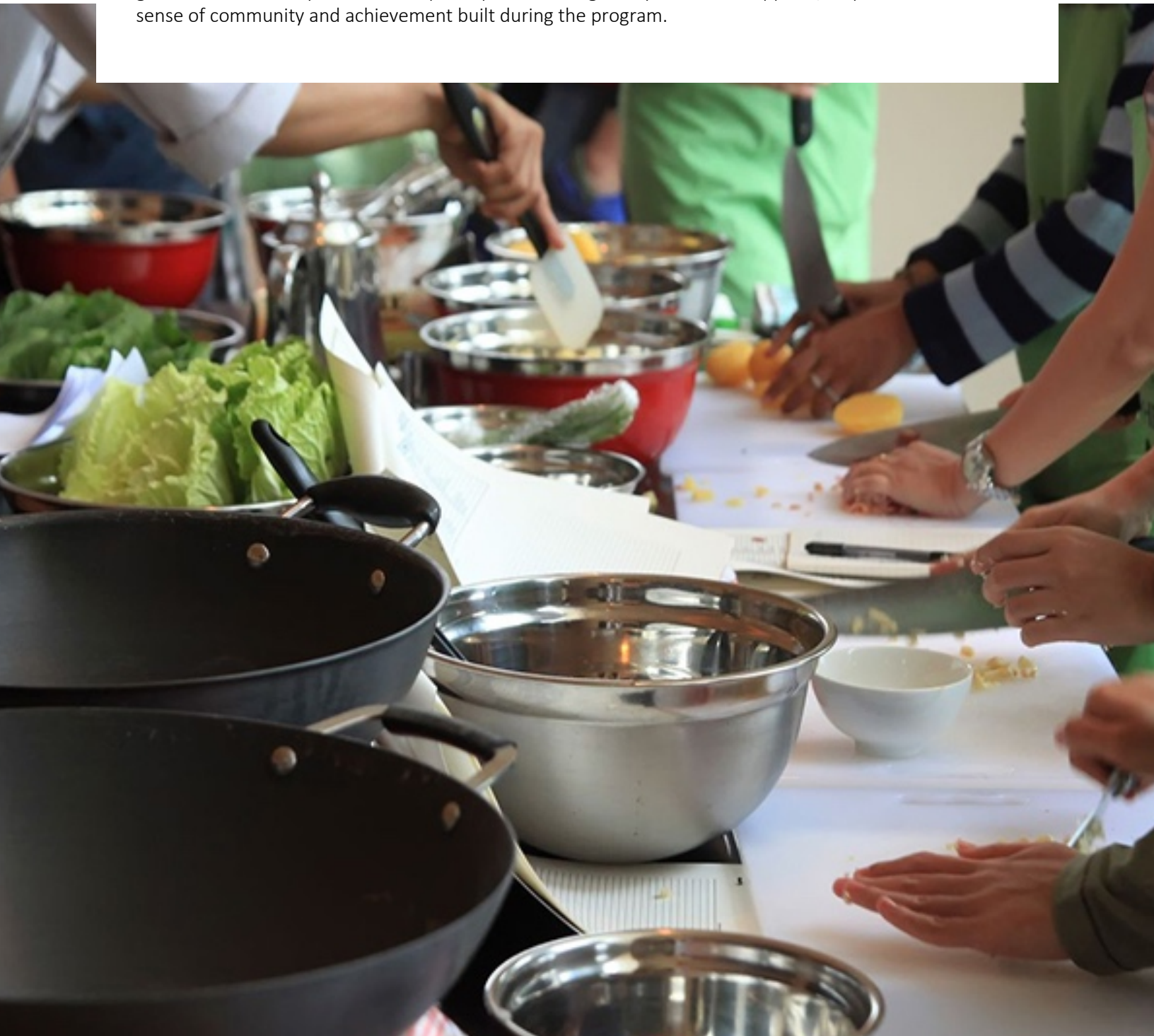
positive impacts. This included recruiting staff who were better able to cope with program demands, and staff who had better rapport with the youth.

***Find experiential learning opportunities outside of the kitchen***

Finding ways for participants to gain experience outside the kitchen, has been challenging but rewarding. The program built in volunteer and social enterprise hours into the curriculum, so that participants would get a chance to practice their skills and learn about other aspects of food service work (e.g., helping on an organic farm). Field trips organized for some of the later cohorts of participants had positive feedback, such that participants could see where their skills could be applied in the future.

***Celebrate successes for graduating participants***

Completing the program is an important and significant milestone for participants. Hosting a formal graduation ceremony that allowed participants to bring family and other supports, helped reinforce the sense of community and achievement built during the program.





# Conclusions

## CTY program improved employment and education outcomes

Based on quantitative and qualitative findings, Good Food Brampton's Culinary Training for Youth (CTY) intervention improved employment and education outcomes for at-risk and newcomer youth participants in Peel.

### Positive results particularly evident for participants who completed the program

Our findings capture mainly the outcomes and insights of youth who were successful in the program, and who completed the in-kitchen and placement components of the program. We found that for youth well-suited to this program, CTY has positive outcomes related to employment readiness (both in the culinary trades and transferable skills for other industries) general knowledge about food and the food service industry. Even CTY participants who did not continue with culinary work gained transferrable employment readiness skills and knowledge.

### CTY enhanced psychosocial capacity and wellbeing of youth participants

CTY participants also improved their social connections, wellbeing, and self-confidence, and health.

An unexpected outcome was that the CTY group had lower pre-program social connections, informal kitchen skills, food access, and health, as compared to the FS control group, but these differences had disappeared by program end. This suggests that the CTY program may contribute reducing risk factors for negative outcomes for youth (e.g., poor health; food insecurity, lack of community connections).

The CTY program worked particularly well for youth who were motivated to pursue an educational and certification opportunity, and had the personal capacity to work in the culinary industry. Careful outreach, recruitment, support, and tailored learning environments were keys to successful participant experiences, and to mitigating attrition. The other key learning was that every participant and cohort is different. Flexible and responsive participant support was vital to helping at-risk youth gain needed skills and confidence for education and employment.

## Strengths and limitations of this report

Strengths of these findings include the comparison to a non-equivalent control group, the multiple measurements of outcomes as the program progressed, and the triangulation of results across quantitative and qualitative findings. Limitations to the current evaluation findings include lack of generalizability, selection bias, and small sample sizes due to attrition.

### *Strengths of control group, mixed method, and longitudinal comparisons*

Comparing results to a control group helped us understand if the CTY results were more than would be expected from general food skill education. Comparing changes in scores over time allows us to see how knowledge and skills changed over the course of the program, rather than relying on participants memory of what changed. Similarly, triangulating results across quantitative and qualitative methods makes our findings more robust.

### *Lack of generalizability*

Our sample is not randomly selected from the larger population, and therefore likely does not fully represent all youth in our target group. In particular, our sample size was not large enough to drill down into outcomes across socio-demographic factors. It is not clear from the current analysis how participants' personal context influenced outcomes in the program.

### ***Selection bias and attrition***

We did not randomly assign participants to intervention and control groups. This means our results may be biased by participants self-selecting into conditions, and outcomes may be due to factors other than the intervention.

There is also selection bias and potential lack of generalizability in our results due to attrition, such that participants who completed the end-point survey and focus group, as well as the 6-month follow-up, may not represent participants in general. Participants who do not complete the program are less likely to fill out program end-point surveys. Participants who have good experiences and outcomes may be more likely to respond to follow-up interviews.

Attrition is a limitation of longitudinal sampling. We used incentives and are made multiple attempts to contact and follow-up, while not intruding beyond the terms of the informed consent and participant contact preferences.

When outreach and recruitment were more challenging than expected, or where program retention and attrition was an issue, cohort sample sizes were smaller than anticipated. This also means there is an additional risk that our sample is not representative of the overall population. In particular, the promising follow-up findings are limited by the very small sample size.

### ***Current evidence and next steps***

Overall, the current results suggest that the CTY program is effective at improving employment and education outcomes. However, the current findings should be replicated and verified with future research. In addition, the program's attrition rate needs ongoing attention. The next section explores process evaluation learnings from CTY program delivery.

## **Recommendations**

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

- Student motivation and capacity to pursue culinary training and food service industry work
- Funding programs that provide advocacy and case management alongside skills training
- Recognizing the diverse supports needed by at-risk youth
- Recognizing and working to minimize the burdens placed on program staff to meet the needs of students

Organizations and policymakers looking to fund similar initiatives should recognize the diverse supports needed to support at-risk youth in gaining capacity and skills for employment and education.

In addition, designers of future similar programs should recognize that process evaluation data is essential for evidence-informed responsiveness in program delivery. In particular, collecting regular feedback from participants as well as collaborative reflection among partners is an useful method for ensuring responsive program delivery.

## **Next Steps**

Project partners are currently expanding the CTY project model, and are testing a culinary training program for newcomer adults. Plans for culinary training with an enhanced focus on newcomer-youth are also in the proposal stages.

Project partners will be working on sharing the promising practices detailed in this evaluation report in order access other funding to support underemployed youth, and to inform and improve culinary and employment training offered via program partners.

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# Appendices

Appendix A: CTY logic model

Appendix B: Pre/post surveys

Appendix C: Detailed statistical analysis

Appendix D: Intake form

Appendix E: Withdrawal letter