



VOLUNTEER
MANITOBA



Youth Hub Report:

Surveying the
Quality of Service
Distribution in
Manitoba's
Youth Sector

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This report was compiled and presented to Volunteer Manitoba by Qudus Abusaleh VM Research Assistant 2020

Youth Organizations Consulted

92



Youth Outreach Services
Development & Leadership
Employment Services
Recreation & Health
Counselling Services

Preface

In July 2019, as part of our new youth engagement strategy, we set out to gain a better understanding of youth programming and services offered across the province. In doing so, we launched a call to youth organizations to come together to share their insights into the successes, gaps, challenges, and future of their work in the sector.

Following our successful and highly attended VM Youth Hub, we decided to use all insights collected to create an expanded survey that captures, and reflects, a more detailed overview of Manitoba's youth sector. Released in early July 2020, our second survey enabled us to reach more youth organizations across more diverse and representative service categories, including:

- Youth Outreach Services:** Enabling youth to gain skills, knowledge, and positive attitudes through education, mentorship, volunteerism, friendship, and community development
- Youth Development and Leadership:** Providing leadership opportunities and skills-based training, including organization and communication skills, decision-making, public speaking, and more.
- Youth Employment Services:** Empowering youth to overcome employment barriers by providing skill development and resources such as job referrals, job matching, interview preparation, and making resumes and cover letters.
- Youth Recreation and Health:** Engaging youth in meaningful, accessible and active participation in physical and social activities that foster individual, community, and environmental well-being
- Youth Counselling Services:** Helping youth overcome emotional and social difficulties through one-on-one counselling, sharing advice, community healing practices, peer support, and more.

In total, we have been able to reach 92 youth organizations across the province.

The research process was thoroughly enjoyed by all Volunteer Manitoba staff involved. We were delighted to hear about what drives people to work in the sector, what successes they experienced, and the direction they envision for youth programming and services. We appreciated the interest of participating youth organizations to share with us pressing challenges and gaps in the sector.

We believe strongly in the power and importance of providing quality programming and services to our youth. It has been our goal to present a thorough overview of sector wide challenges as a way to locate what steps must be taken to work towards a supported, accessible, and inclusive youth sector.

We wish to thank:



Executive Summary

Background

Youth programs and services are fundamental tools for shaping the present and future of today's youth. There has never been a time where our young people have been as diverse, educated, and socially engaged. It is critical to ensure that youth programs and services can locate and adapt to the needs of today's youth.

To work towards this goal, we made efforts to develop a systemic understanding of Manitoba's youth sector, placing an emphasis on the human relationships developed between an organization and its youth participants.

Methodology

Our research project surveyed the quality of program and service distribution in Manitoba by identifying the general patterns, challenges, and gaps characterizing the youth sector. We held several focus group sessions involving youth organizations across the province to gather their stories, successes, challenges, gaps, and recommendations.

The data collected was used to build an online survey resulting in responses from 92 organizations.

Findings

In the end we found that the five most common challenges among youth organizations are:

1. Funding
2. Engaging adults and guardians
3. Consistent attendance
4. Staffing shortages, and
5. Volunteer recruitment.

The most pressing gaps we have identified include mental health supports for youth and language diversity in programs and services.

Stable funding | Effective youth engagement | Holistic approach | Adaptable, cost-sensitive, & comprehensive mental health programs & services | Staff & volunteer diversity | Strong volunteer recruitment & engagement practices

Recommendations

Our six recommendations include:

1. **The quality and consistency of programming and services requires stable funding**
2. **Effective youth engagement is characterized by strong relationships with parents and schools**
3. **A quality youth sector requires a holistic approach to youth programming and services incorporating mental, physical, and emotional dimensions to their programming and services**
4. **Growing mental health needs must be met with adaptable, cost-sensitive, and comprehensive mental health programs and services**
5. **Staff and volunteer diversity is key to inclusive and engaging youth programming and services**
6. **Strong volunteer recruitment and engagement practices is key to quality program and service delivery**

Our Findings

Lack of stable funding results in unstable youth programming and services

Almost **97 percent** of all survey participants reported funding as their most pressing challenge.

Considering the close link between funding, staffing, attendance, and volunteer engagement, we have found that unstable funding is a major cause of program and service uncertainty in the sector.

It was found that unstable funding diminishes the consistency of programming and services. Survey participants reported that unstable funding limits the sector's ability to align and adapt its programming and services to changing youth needs.

We found that unstable funding can also impact access to funding. For example, some youth organizations reported that staff shortages, caused by unstable funding, can hamper the ability to assign staff to navigate lengthy grant applications, which then puts these organizations at a considerable disadvantage.

Effective youth engagement is characterized by strong relationships with parents and schools

Among organizations that reported a positive relationship with their surrounding communities, it was found that regular communication with parents

and schools was key.

Developing strong relationships with schools was found to be a major source of a) finding potential youth participants, and b) identifying youth needs.

Organizations prioritizing parent and adult engagement, through home visits, doorstep conversations, and community events, reported more positive and consistent youth attendance and participation.

A quality sector requires a holistic approach to youth programming and services

40 percent of organizations surveyed noted that difficulties in maintaining consistent attendance numbers was one of their top three most pressing challenges.

We found that organizations operating with a holistic understanding of youth needs reported more consistent attendance and engagement.

Organizations that are able to incorporate mental, physical, and emotional dimensions to their programming and services are more likely to form stronger relationships with youth.

Additionally, organizations that place an emphasis on communicating to youth exactly what programs and services are offered tend to see more consistent attendance and engagement.

Lack of stable funding results in unstable youth programming & services

Our Findings

Growing mental health needs must be met with adaptable, cost-sensitive, and comprehensive mental health programs and services

Service navigation and affordability in the mental health sector is difficult for youth. Of the organizations surveyed, only **11 percent** fit into the youth counselling category.

While many organizations noted that funding is a barrier to effective mental health resources, organizations that prioritized existing funds to staff mental health training, research, and resource provision, tend to fair better when it comes to consistent, effective, and positive youth engagement.

Cost-friendly initiatives taken by surveyed organizations to expand their provision of mental health resources include:

- Connecting with school counsellors
- Forming relationships with spiritual and faith-based chaplains,
- Implementing Indigenous models of sharing/healing circles
- Centralizing city-wide supports and services in print material and online

Staff and volunteer diversity is key to inclusive and engaging youth programming and services

We found among our surveyed organizations a growing consensus that the youth sector must move from a programmatic to a systemic approach when it comes to engaging youth.

Refugee, immigrant, and LGBTQ+ youth make up more than 50 percent of participants in organizations surveyed. A move towards a systemic approach

in the youth sector would require the hiring and training of staff that share similar lived experiences to youth participants.

Among organizations with diverse staff and volunteers, we found a more intricate understanding of programming and service needs for visible minority youth.

For example, in one such organization, we observed that there was an understanding that older refugee youth (18-24) had more responsibilities compared to non-refugee youth in the same age group. These include adapting to a new learning environment and high school graduation, playing an important part in household income, and supporting the physical and emotional well-being of younger siblings.

With this understanding in mind, the organization in question was able to modify programming and services offered to older refugee youth. Arrangements made included weekend in-school academic tutoring programs, weekend development programs, and comprehensive employment training and assistance.

Additionally, we found that of the organizations surveyed, only 4 percent reported using a language other than English and French.

Representative and diverse staffing and volunteer recruitment practices would also have the additional benefit of better communication and higher levels of engagement with youth and their parents.

11%

Service navigation & affordability in the mental health sector is difficult for youth. Of the organizations surveyed, only 11 percent fit into the youth counselling category.



Our Findings

Strong volunteer recruitment and engagement practices is key to quality program and service delivery

Over 50 percent of youth organizations surveyed reported that volunteer recruitment and engagement is their fifth biggest challenge.

It was found that although many high school youth expressed wanting to be paired to a mentor, youth organizations noted difficulties in recruiting adult volunteers, particularly adult males.

Some volunteer recruitment and engagement strategies shared by organizations with large volunteer bases include:

- Utilizing volunteer-matching resources such as high school/university/college boards, social media, and volunteer recruiting organizations
- Encouraging parents and family members of youth participants to volunteer
- Clear messaging about how volunteerism can lead to skill development
- Encouraging past participants in youth programs to volunteer
- Planning volunteer appreciation initiatives and events
- Offering school credits for volunteerism

Strong volunteer recruitment and engagement practices is key to quality program and service delivery



Our goal through this research process was to contribute to conversations around the effectiveness, quality, inclusivity, & accessibility of youth programming & services across the province.

Research Methodology

Research Context

Our goal through this research process was to contribute to conversations around the effectiveness, quality, inclusivity, and accessibility of youth programming and services across the province.

For this research, we used the following definitions:

- *Youth* is defined as any participant in the organizations surveyed aged 15-30
- *Youth programming* is defined as particular activities oriented towards the development of youth through health and recreation, social life, culture, or education
- *Youth services* is defined as the engagement of youth in organized activities that help them contribute to their direct environment

We launched this research project with a firm belief that the youth sector is one of the most important aspects of our society. A strong youth sector translates into a strong future.

Research Focus

Throughout this research project we have focused on surveying youth organizations in the province to locate the challenges and gaps experienced in the youth sector.

In doing so, we wanted to develop an overview of youth programming and services to enable participating youth organization to see what they share in common with other organizations, and to come across different practices and models of youth engagement that could supplement their own work.

Our research focus ultimately has been to try and play a part in identifying what steps can be taken to ensure that youth across the province have the opportunities they need to socialize, develop, and transition into adulthood.

Design, Sampling & Data Collection

The design of our research was both quantitative and qualitative. This enabled us to observe patterns that can be generalized across the sector, and to gain valuable first-hand insights that helped us arrive at a stronger understanding of the observed patterns.

We collected data through focus group discussion and online surveys from September 2019 to July 2020. Using data from 211 Manitoba, as well as Volunteer Manitoba contacts, youth organizations across the province were invited to participate in our research process.

The primary focus of our focus group discussions was to capture insights directly from individuals and organizations working in the sector. We used semi-structured interview questions to guide round-table discussions.

We have focused on surveying youth organizations in the province to locate the challenges & gaps experienced in the youth sector.



Research Methodology

Research Methodology

After completing our focus group discussions, we used the data and insights collected to create a follow-up online survey. For example, through focus-group discussions, we were able to locate five of the most widely mentioned challenges in the sector, including:

- Funding uncertainties
- Staffing shortages
- Inconsistent or low attendance
- Volunteer recruitment
- Adult/parent engagement

We then used these challenges in our online survey by allowing respondents to arrange them from most challenging to least challenging.

Our follow-up online survey was also an opportunity to engage youth organizations that were unable to participate in our focus group discussions.

In total, our research reflects data and insights collected from 92 participating youth organizations across the province.

Table 1. Regional Areas

REGIONAL AREAS	No.
Winnipeg	66
Northern	8
Parkland	6
Interlake	6
Westman	5
Eastman	1

Table 2. Winnipeg Areas*

WINNIPEG AREAS	No.
City Centre	16
South East	13
South West	11
West Winnipeg	9
North East	9
North West	8

*Total of 66 Winnipeg organizations

To organize our 92 participating youth organizations, we created a service categorization model to place them in subgroups that reflect the nature of the programs and services they offer.

Table 3. Service Categories

SERVICE CATEGORY	No.
Development & Leadership	29
Recreation and Health	26
Employment	15
Outreach	14
Counselling	8

Data Charts

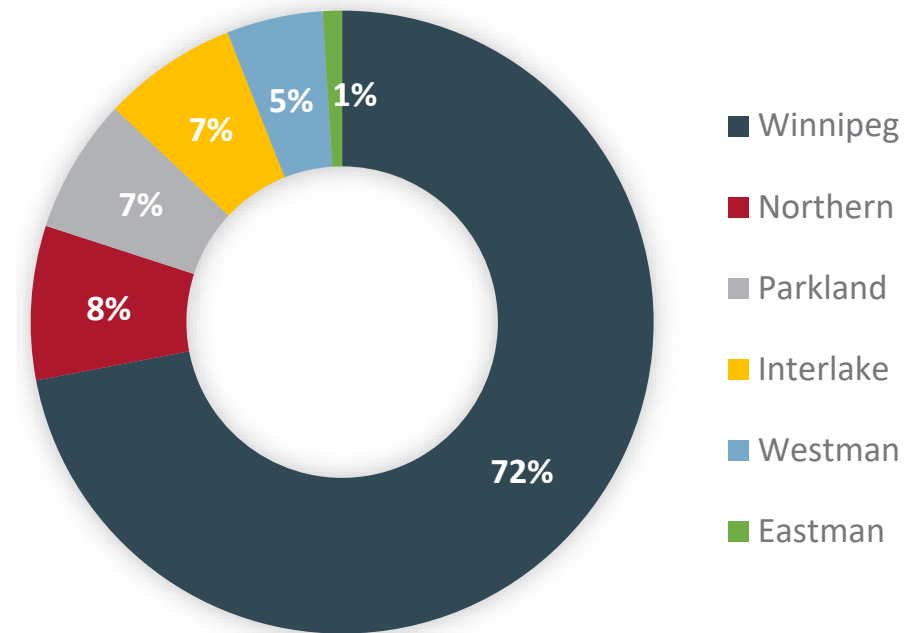


Figure 1: Regional Areas

Figure 2: City Areas

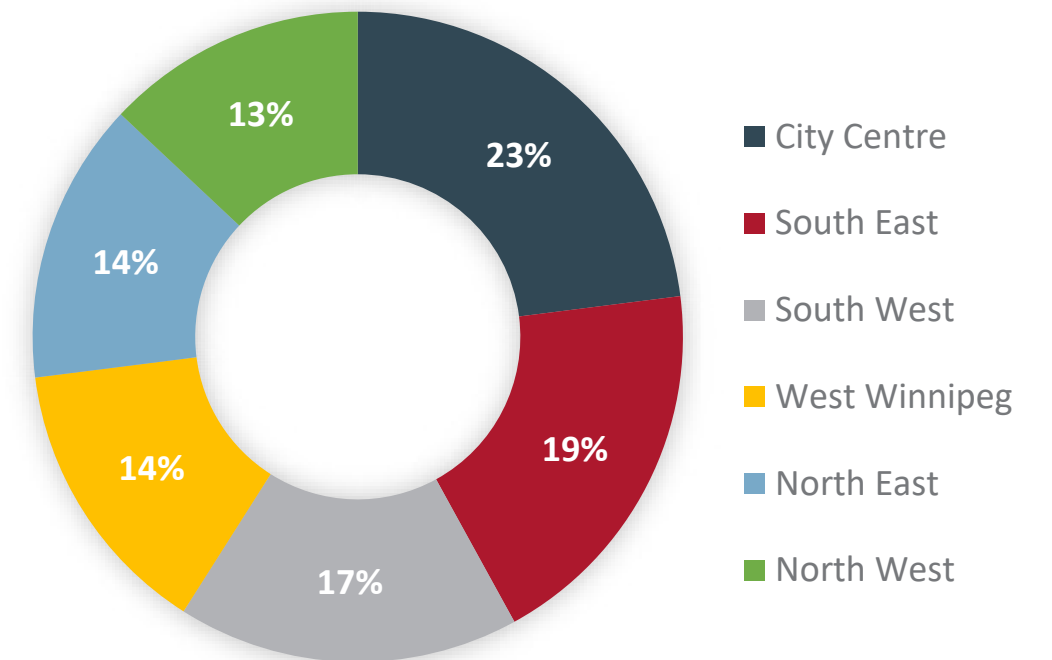


Figure 3:
Service
Categories

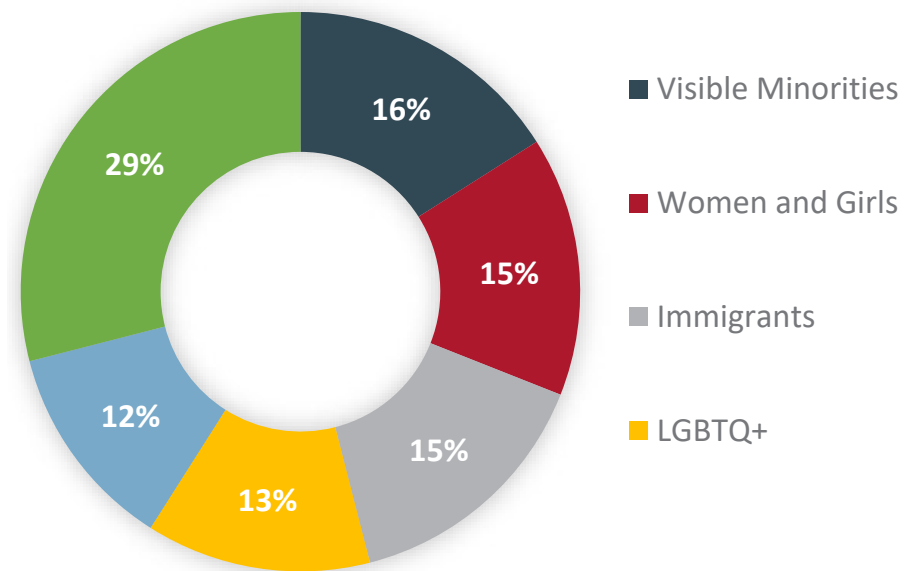
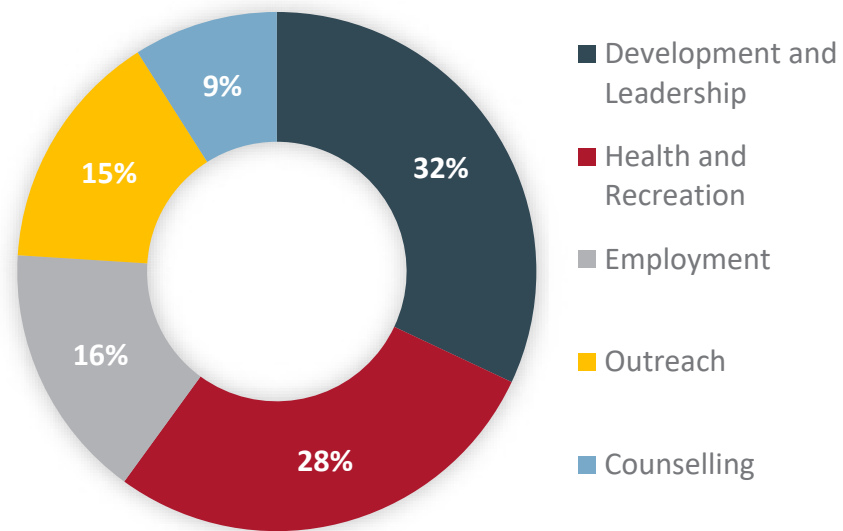


Figure 4:
Backgrounds
of Youth

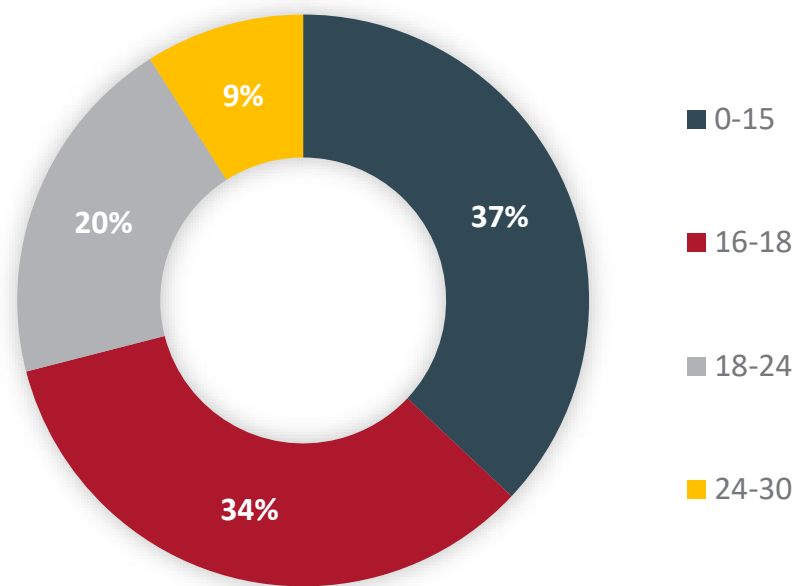


Figure 5:
Average Age
Range of Youth

Volunteer Manitoba Youth Sector Survey Participants:

WINNIPEG	
Aksyon Ng Ating Kabataan (ANAK) Inc.	Manitoba Buddhist Vihara and Cultural Association
1JustCity	Manitoba Cooperative Association
Accueil francophone	Manitoba Education
Anxiety Disorders Association of Manitoba	Manitoba Federation of NPOs
Assiniboine Park Conservancy	Manitoba Museum
Assiniboine Youth Foundation	Manitoba SwimAbility
BBB Education Foundation of MB	Maples Youth Activity Centre
Boys & Girls Club	New Directions
Boys and Girls Clubs of Winnipeg	Newcomers Employment & Education Development Services (N.E.E.D.S.) Inc.
Broadway Neighbourhood Centre	Playing 4 a Purpose
Camp Manitou	Rainbow Resource Centre
Canadian Mental Health Association, Manitoba and Winnipeg	Reaching E-Quality Employment Services
Canadian Muslim Women's Institute Inc.	Recruit Ready Football
Canadian Muslim Women's Institute Inc.	Resource Assistance for Youth, Inc
Canadian Red Cross	Scouts Franco-manitobains
CMHA - Manitoba and Winnipeg	SERC
Creative Foundation Inc.	Sexuality Education Resource Centre
Creative Manitoba	Spence Neighbourhood Association
Elmwood Community Resource Centre	Take Pride Winnipeg
Elmwood Giants Baseball	The Duke of Edinburgh's Award
Festival du Voyageur	The Momentum Centre
FortWhyte Alive	The Winnipeg Foundation
FortWhyte Farms	True North Youth Foundation
Freeze Frame	True North Youth Foundation: Winnipeg Jets Hockey Academy Program
Gas Station Arts Centre	Umunna Young Adults
ImagineAbility Inc.	Voices: Manitoba Youth in Care Network
Ircom	Wayfinders
Ka Ni Kanichihk	West Central Community Program Incorporated
Louis Riel School Division	YFC Winnipeg
Luxton Community Centre	YMCA Summer Work Student Exchange Program
Ma Mawichita Centre	YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg
Macdonald Youth Services	Youth Agencies Alliance
Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth	Youth Employment Services

Volunteer Manitoba Youth Sector Survey Participants:

NORTHERN

Youth Leadership Program Jordan's Principle	Jordan's Principle
Northern Health Region	Recreation and Community Events (Town of Churchill Dept.)
The Pas Friendship Centre Inc.	Brighter Futures and Building Healthy Communities
City of Thompson	The Pas Action Centre Inc.

WESTMAN

City of Brandon Youth Centre	Manitoba Youth Job Centre
YMCA	Manitoba 4-H Council
CEYS Brandon	

PARKLAND

RM of Lakeshore and Ste Rose	Northwest Métis Council Inc.
Manitoba Youth Job Centre	Dauphin Bible Camp
Dauphin Friendship Centre	Dauphin Friendship Centre

INTERLAKE

Manitoba Youth Job Centre	Big Brothers Big Sisters of Portage la Prairie
Portage la Prairie Regional Library	Heartland Recreation Commission
Youth for Christ Portage Inc.	Selkirk Friendship Centre

EASTMAN

Kleefeld Evangelical Mennonite Church	
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