



**Edmonton Region Youth Profile Update 2008**  
Final Report

**Prepared for:**  
City of Edmonton

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2004, the Edmonton Youth Community Engagement Steering Committee carried out a Community Engagement Process on youth employment issues for the Edmonton region (includes St. Albert, Spruce Grove, Sherwood Park and Leduc). The Steering Committee contracted R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. to facilitate the collaboration and coordination of services for youth aged 15 to 30 in Edmonton, as well as to identify the current assets, gaps, needs, and priorities for youth-related employment programming in the Edmonton area.

In 2008, the City of Edmonton commissioned R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. to update the *Edmonton Region Plan for Coordination of Youth Services, 2004-2007 Final Report* through literature and research reviews, and by means of consulting with youth and various stakeholders to obtain current information related to youth employment and youth employment experiences. Consultations were undertaken with a range of stakeholders, including:

- Youth and young adults between the ages of 15 and 30 residing in Edmonton or the surrounding area (referred to interchangeably as youth or young adults);
- Service providers and youth-serving agencies that provide relevant employment-related programs and services for youth and young adults;
- Local employers and stakeholders; and
- Philanthropic organization members.

The findings of the *Edmonton Region Youth Profile Update 2008* suggest that some of the issues are similar to those found in 2004, but there are also new challenges.

The issues identified in 2004 and 2008 are presented in the table below. They are not listed in order of importance in the table below, but rather in an order that allows comparison. Housing, work experience and transportation issues were identified in 2004 and again in 2008 by youth participants. Funding remained an issue for service providers. Some issues were similar, but have shifted in focus. For example, accessing or using available employment resources was replaced by awareness of available employment services. Youths' expectations with respect to employment remained an issue, but self-esteem was replaced by an attitude (i.e., work ethic) issue. Information on career planning or job searching was no longer an issue nor was the need for coordinated youth services. New issues identified in 2008 were mental health supports and affordable child care.

<b>Identified Issues for the Edmonton Youth Project in 2004 and 2008</b>	
<b>2004</b>	<b>2008</b>
Housing or permanent address	Housing or permanent address
Work experience	Work experience
Transportation	Transportation
Funding for service providers	Funding for service providers
Accessing or using available employment resources	Awareness of available employment services
Self-esteem and expectations of youth	Attitudes toward work and expectations of youth
Education or appropriate skills	Employability skills <sup>1</sup>
Employer attitudes and behaviors	Mental health support
Information on career planning or job searching	Affordable child care
Coordination of youth services	

In reviewing the major issues identified in 2008, several recommendations have been developed that address these key issues as detailed below:

***Issue #1: Mental health support (includes addictions and at-risk groups)***

Recommendations:

1. Increase the capacity of social services and related organizations to better serve youth with issues related to mental health, lifestyle choices, cultural, and substance-abuse issues.
2. Provide more one-on-one mentoring and support for young adults.
3. Build flexibility into programs, especially programs addressing substance abuse treatments.
4. Increase participation in life skills programs.

***Issue #2: Housing or permanent address***

Recommendations:

1. Edmonton requires additional low-income/subsidized housing options to meet current needs of youth. Subsidized housing could be linked with employment programming to address the needs of youth tenants and to provide a continuum of support.
2. Youth without housing stability often require a place they can use as a contact point with employers. Service agencies could be encouraged to act as employer contact points for youth.

<sup>1</sup> A section on employability skills was added to the 2008 interview guide.

### ***Issue #3: Attitudes toward work and expectations of youth***

#### Recommendations:

1. Attitude towards work was perceived as something to be fostered and guided by parents and schools throughout a child's development. However, employers can take initiative in encouraging the development of youths' work ethic in a variety of ways. Various employment services throughout Edmonton could make information, programs, workshops, and newsletters available to employers and youth with respect to fostering and teaching a stronger more positive attitude towards employment.
2. Increase awareness among teachers and parents that youth attitude towards work is one of the major employment issues identified for the Edmonton region.
3. Provide affordable and accessible training on conflict resolution, including cross-generational conflict.
  - Encourage a youth-driven initiative to create educational materials, such as videos on how to deal with conflict at the workplace, and advertise it through media popular with youth, such as YouTube, a video sharing website.
4. Provide opportunities for more meaningful career exploration through various options, such as career counseling, work experience or internships programs, which may assist youth in finding a career in a field that interests and motivates them.
5. Better prepare youth for the workforce by fostering more realistic expectations of job requirements and work-related topics such as wages. Also, to reduce the unrealistic expectations of youth for higher wages, provide information and opportunities for youth to better understand the labour market and employer expectations.

### ***Issue #4: Work experience***

#### Recommendations:

1. Increase the community's awareness of, and participation in, currently available work experience opportunities for youth. Also, increase the range and type of work experience opportunities in various industries and occupations. Specific actions could include:
  - Encourage youth/young adults to participate in work experience placement programs (such as Registered Apprenticeship Programs) in sectors that are expanding or experiencing human resource shortages in the region.
  - Increase collaboration between schools, local businesses and governments to offer work experience programs. Look at best practices currently being conducted—including work done by the Alberta Employment and Immigration, Administration Unit which is a leading innovator in terms of linking youth to work experience.
  - Engage employers in the development and delivery of youth employment programs, for example, through research aimed at exploring employer needs and how they could be addressed as well as how to increase participation in employment programs. This will help to ensure their issues related to employing youth are addressed and encourage buy-in and participation in new or existing programs and services.

- Consider incentives for employers who participate in youth work experience programs. Small to medium-sized employers who accept students for work experience may have substantial burden placed upon them. Therefore, the incentives, whether they are monetary or non-financial—such as community recognition awards, community dinners or free advertising and promotion—could provide support for employers and encourage participation.
  - Expand marketing of youth/young adults to employers, as some employers may be hesitant to work with youth (especially high school drop-outs or at-risk youth). Employer training to overcome negative stereotypes associated with youth/young adults may be beneficial.
2. Encourage employers to provide more in-depth, hands-on and personal job training. Furthermore, increase the opportunities for employers and youth/young adults to partake in the training by offering it at various times and making it affordable.

#### ***Issue #5: Employability skills***

##### Recommendations:

1. Emphasize workforce/employability skills (interview, résumé writing, and life skills) required by local employers through existing programs that provide employment-related information to Edmonton and area youth/young adults through schools and/or employment and life skills agencies.
2. Increase awareness of services (including job skills training) provided by the various employment and life skills agencies.
3. Foster the provision of more work experience opportunities through local employers to help youth and young adults gain experience in a workplace setting while also learning necessary employability skills.
4. Provide sufficient funding to continue and/or expand programs that offer both employability and life skills training, and use them as a model to increase the effectiveness of other programs.

#### ***Issue #6: Awareness of available employment services***

##### Recommendations:

1. Increase awareness of the variety of services and programs available, especially among youth and service providers/youth-serving agencies.
  - Create a position for a community liaison worker to promote available programs at the various shelters and drop-in centres; and
  - Advertising by methods appropriate to the largest audience.
2. Increase opportunities for participation in programs and services.
  - Improve the career and development services in schools. Examine successful programs to use as models for developing programming;
  - Make participation in career counseling mandatory in the schools;
  - Create more inclusive participation criteria;
  - Increase flexibility in programming length and schedule; and

- Support existing life and employability skills training programs that provide funding to the attending youth, allowing them to keep up with their living expenses while participating in the program.
- 3. Concentrate on long-term planning in service delivery and provide continuous support for successful services rather than creating new ones.
- 4. Coordinate the timing of various complementary programs and services, taking into consideration the schedules of various programs to allow full-time employed youth to participate.
- 5. Maintain a comprehensive and current database of services and programs. Although the Directory of Youth Services by EIYSA is updated annually it does not list all of the available services.
- 6. Address the attitudes and behaviours of parents, teachers, employers and youth through promoting the advantages of accessing school-to-work opportunities, including work-experience programs.

### ***Issue #7: Funding for service providers***

#### Recommendations:

1. Increase awareness of funding available for employment and life skills related programs.
2. Develop more appropriate outcomes criteria for funding programs that offer basic supports.
3. Develop more partnerships between municipal, provincial and federal governments to create long-term and comprehensive plans and coordinated services (avoiding duplication of initiatives and services).
4. Harmonize regulations like the welfare support programs and Employment Insurance, and work toward avoiding duplication of services among the various service providers.
5. Create processes of sustainable funding.
6. Examine social enterprise structures and consider applying strategies which are successful to current programs and services.

### ***Issue #8: Transportation***

Although, there has been a number of improvements on this issue since 2004 (i.e., the introduction of the U-Pass Program), transportation continues to be problematic for youth with regards to employment.

#### Recommendations:

1. Increase the ease with which youth in need can access free or subsidized public transportation. By appealing for support and donations from the community through programs, such as Donate-A-Ride, bus tickets are available to service providers. Youth-serving agencies could encourage targeted campaigns to address youth transportation issues specifically.
2. Continue to provide discount bus tickets to youth participating in services or programs.
3. Sites/organizations that depend on youth as a large portion of their workforce could provide shuttle services to facilitate transportation to and from jobsites (for example, Industrial Park areas or surrounding communities). This service could be offered through the transit system or through employers. A regional “broker” service could be considered

to help employers identify common needs with respect to after-hours transportation services for their staff.

4. Expand Dial-a-Bus service which would allow youth to access public transportation outside of the regularly scheduled times or outside of normal bus routes.
5. Explore the benefits to providing subsidized transportation costs with employers who already provide this benefit to employees, particularly youth. Inform other employers of the benefits of providing youth with bus tickets or passes as an employment benefit, such as decreasing absenteeism or lateness, as applicable.

### ***Issue #9: Affordable child care***

#### Recommendations:

1. Affordable child care is a nation-wide problem. Research into innovative and successful approaches in other parts of Alberta, in other provinces and/or in other countries would provide an inventory of best practices. From here, relevant and practical options and approaches could be explored.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION AND IMPLEMENTATION**

### **Recommendations for the Edmonton Youth Engagement Committee**

#### Recommendation #1: Awareness of Identified Issues among Stakeholders

Ensure awareness of the above-mentioned issues among organizations, businesses and government departments involved in influencing the policies and programming related to the identified challenges experienced by youth in the Edmonton region.

#### Recommendation #2: Dissemination of Findings among Stakeholders

Make the Final Report or a Summary Report for the *Edmonton Region Youth Profile Update 2008* publicly available through the internet or other means, including websites of the Steering Committee, and venues such as the Edmonton Inter-Agency Youth Services Association (EIYSA). The Consultant could also contact participating stakeholders and provide information about where to access the web-posted Final or Summary Report.

#### Recommendation #3: Action Plan for Addressing the Identified Issues

Where it is possible for the Edmonton Youth Community Engagement Committee to directly initiate actions on specific issues, the Committee could identify priorities, “next steps”, and strategic goals based on the recommendations provided throughout this report, as well as implement further actions.

Where the Edmonton Youth Community Engagement Committee cannot directly initiate actions on specific issues, the Committee could serve as an educator and/or coordinating body among organizations, businesses and government departments involved in influencing the policies and programming related to the identified challenges experienced by youth in the Edmonton region.

### **Review and update evaluation strategy**

#### Recommendation #1: Action-oriented Approach to Increase Awareness and Participation

The Edmonton Youth Community Engagement Committee could take an action-oriented approach rather than information-oriented approach to the identified issues. The priority should be to increase awareness of the existing programs and to encourage participation among youth and youth-at-risk, service providers/youth-serving agencies and employers. For

example, the Committee could develop a communication strategy for employers and youth to ensure mutual awareness, and the promotion of the programs and services being offered by the employment agencies.

Recommendation #2: Coordinate Collaboration for Best Practices and Dialogue

The Edmonton Youth Community Engagement Committee could coordinate collaboration between various stakeholders to identify best practices and opportunities for open dialogue.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND.....	1
1.2 PROJECT OBJECTIVES .....	2
1.3 CHANGES SINCE THE PREVIOUS REPORT .....	3
1.4 METHODOLOGY .....	5
1.5 RESEARCH CONSIDERATIONS.....	5
1.6 PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS.....	6
<b>SECTION 2: YOUTH ISSUES AND REALITIES IN EDMONTON AND AREA .....</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1 THE “DEMOGRAPHIC BOMB” IN CANADA .....	8
2.2 EDMONTON’S YOUTH POPULATION .....	8
2.3 YOUTH EMPLOYMENT.....	9
2.4 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT .....	10
<b>SECTION 3: YOUTH &amp; YOUNG ADULT EMPLOYMENT SERVICES .....</b>	<b>11</b>
3.1 SERVICES FOR YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS.....	11
3.2 BEST PRACTICES IN YOUTH EMPLOYMENT SERVICE DELIVERY .....	11
3.3 BEST PRACTICES IN EDUCATION PROGRAMMING .....	12
3.4 ACCESSING TARGETED PROGRAMS AND SERVICES .....	12
<b>SECTION 4: IDENTIFIED ISSUES AFFECTING YOUTH &amp; YOUNG ADULT EMPLOYMENT ...</b>	<b>14</b>
4.1 ISSUE #1: MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT .....	16
4.2 ISSUE #2: HOUSING OR PERMANENT ADDRESS .....	18
4.3 ISSUE #3: ATTITUDES TOWARD WORK AND EXPECTATIONS OF YOUTH .....	19
4.4 ISSUE #4: WORK EXPERIENCE.....	22
4.5 ISSUE #5: EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS.....	24
4.6 ISSUE #6: AWARENESS OF AVAILABLE EMPLOYMENT SERVICES .....	26
4.7 ISSUE #7: FUNDING FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS .....	28
4.8 ISSUE #8: TRANSPORTATION .....	30
4.9 ISSUE #9: AFFORDABLE CHILD CARE .....	32
<b>SECTION 5: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION .....</b>	<b>33</b>
5.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EDMONTON YOUTH ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE .....	33
5.2 REVIEW AND UPDATE EVALUATION STRATEGY .....	33
<b>APPENDIX A - BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>APPENDIX B - DIRECTORY OF YOUTH SERVICES.....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>APPENDIX C – YOUTH INTERVIEW GUIDE .....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>APPENDIX D – EMPLOYER INTERVIEW GUIDE.....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>APPENDIX E – SERVICE PROVIDERS &amp; YOUTH-SERVING AGENCIES INTERVIEW GUIDE .....</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>APPENDIX F – PHILANTHROPISTS INTERVIEW GUIDE .....</b>	<b>74</b>

## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

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The following section outlines the project background and objectives for the *Edmonton Region Youth Profile Update (2008)*.

### 1.1 Project Background

In 2004, the Edmonton Youth Community Engagement Steering Committee carried out a Community Engagement Process on youth employment issues for the Edmonton region (includes St. Albert, Spruce Grove, Sherwood Park and Leduc). The Steering Committee contracted R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. to facilitate the collaboration and coordination of services for youth aged 15-30 in Edmonton, as well as to identify the current assets, gaps, needs, and priorities for youth-related employment programming in the Edmonton area. The *Edmonton Region Plan for Coordination of Youth Services 2004-2007 Final Report* included recommendations for ten major identified issues, as well as for coordinating and improving youth employment services. Additionally, the report included an implementation, communication, and evaluation strategy. The community engagement process involved consultations with youth and youth sub-populations, youth-serving agencies, and employers (Phase One), as well as consultations with stakeholders who deliver interventions to youth, and consultations with the philanthropic community (Phase Two).

In 2008, the City of Edmonton commissioned R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. to update the *Edmonton Region Plan for Coordination of Youth Services, 2004-2007 Final Report* through literature and research reviews, and by means of consulting with youth and specific sub-populations within youth, youth-serving agencies, and employers to obtain information related to youth employment and youth employment experiences.

The findings of the *Edmonton Region Youth Profile Update 2008 Final Report* suggest that some of the issues identified by the stakeholders are similar to those found in 2004, but there are also several new challenges.

The issues identified in 2004 and 2008 are presented in the table below. They are not listed in order of importance in the table below, but rather in an order that allows comparison. Housing, work experience and transportation issues were identified in 2004 and again in 2008 by youth participants. Funding remained an issue for service providers. Other issues were similar, but have shifted in focus. For example, accessing or using available employment resources was replaced by awareness of available employment services. Youths' expectations with respect to employment remained an issue, but self-esteem was replaced by youth attitudes and expectations about work (e.g., work ethic). Information on career planning or job searching was no longer an issue nor was the need for coordinated youth services. New issues identified in 2008 were mental health supports and affordable child care.

Identified Issues for the Edmonton Youth Project in 2004 and 2008	
2004	2008
Housing or permanent address	Housing or permanent address
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Self-esteem and expectations of youth	Attitudes toward work and expectations of youth
Education or appropriate skills	Employability skills <sup>2</sup>
Employer attitudes and behaviors	Mental health supports
Information on career planning or job searching	Affordable child care
Coordination of youth services	

## 1.2 Project Objectives

The primary objective of the project was for the Consultant to gather information in order to update the *Edmonton Region Plan for Coordination of Youth Services 2004-2007 Final Report*, which identified the assets, gaps, needs and priorities for youth-related employment programming in the Edmonton region. The specific objectives of the *Edmonton Region Youth Profile Update 2008* project are:

1. To update the profile of youth issues by:
  - Providing an understanding of current status, trends and issues;
  - Identifying factors affecting youth employment;
  - Updating available youth services and resources;
  - Assisting funding agencies to make informed programming decisions; and
  - Informing the broad community of stakeholders and service providers.
2. To review and update the recommendations made in the *Edmonton Region Plan for Coordination of Youth Services, 2004-2007 Final Report* based on newly identified issues. Specifically, examine to what extent the recommendations from the *2004-2007 Final Report* were followed, and if they were found to be feasible.

<sup>2</sup> A section on employability skills was added to the 2008 interview guide.

3. To review and update the evaluation strategies recommended in the *Edmonton Region Plan for Coordination of Youth Services, 2004-2007 Final Report*.
4. To compare 2008 results with those found in 2004, including:
  - Examination of current information to what the issues were in 2004 and what they are in 2008;
  - Compare main findings; and
  - Examine which specific recommendations were implemented.

### **1.3 Changes since the Previous Report**

Since the *Edmonton Region Plan for Coordination of Youth Services, 2004-2007* Project, the Edmonton Youth Engagement Steering Committee remained intact as a coordinating body. The committee was still seen, by its membership, as serving a valuable purpose. However, maintaining it has been challenging as it is not sponsored by any order of government. Therefore, many individuals who were involved with the committee were doing so, not as part of their job requirements, but mostly on a voluntary basis. Furthermore, a lot of committee roles were being taken over by other community organizations. Despite these challenges, the committee continued to operate as a network group to ensure that information continued to be shared with the membership.

Following the completion of the *Edmonton Region Plan for Coordination of Youth Services, 2004-2007* project, the Committee was able to address many recommendations made in the final report. To this end, the Committee established a number of Task Groups to undertake topic-specific activities in response to the issues identified during the project. These Task Groups included:

- Transportation;
- Communication;
- Evaluation;
- Shelter; and
- Sustainable and Appropriate Employment/Education/Skills Development/ Career Planning.

#### 1.3.1 Transportation

To address the recommendations pertaining to transportation, the Transportation Task Group donned the role of advocate and involved representatives of the Edmonton, St. Albert, and Sherwood Park transit systems to obtain information regarding transit policies and initiatives, such as information on the process of changing the routes. As a result, progress was made with regards to the transportation issues around accessing areas such as South Common, and Industrial Area with the help of the Dial-a-Bus service. Another successful outcome was the creation of the U-Pass for the post-secondary students of the University of Alberta and Grant MacEwan College.

### 1.3.2 Communication

The goal of the Communications Task Group was to create a communications plan for the Edmonton Youth Engagement Steering Committee, and to implement and update the plan on an annual basis. The Task Group's efforts resulted in the increased participation of Service Provider Agencies using the Support Network's 211 lines. Following through on the recommendations from the *Edmonton Region Plan for Coordination of Youth Services* report, the Committee had developed a terms of reference document, and made the Summative and the Final *Edmonton Region Plan for Coordination of Youth Services* Reports available to service providers, government agencies, and other various stakeholders. The report was also published, advertised in the newspapers, and was made available at youth drop-in centres, libraries and on the internet (City of Edmonton website).

### 1.3.3 Evaluation

The Evaluation Task Group was to develop baselines for an evaluation of the Edmonton Regional Plan. The group developed a work plan, which included successful indicators, evaluation processes for each success indicator, baseline data requirements and follow-up dates. Further, the group collected data, such as referrals to key youth employment related service agencies in April 2006, and compiled program outcome statistics for 2003/04. Although the data was collected, it was not analyzed.

### 1.3.4 Shelter

The Shelter Task Group's role was to promote strategies to minimize homelessness by acting as a liaison for information exchange. This approach was adopted because community organizations were better able to focus their efforts to meet the challenges of this issue than the Committee and had the necessary funding to achieve the necessary outcomes.

### 1.3.5 Sustainable and Appropriate Employment/Education/Skills Development/ Career Planning

The Sustainable and Appropriate Employment/Education/Skills Development/Career Planning Task Group focused on facilitating processes that addressed issues specifically related to the ability of youth to access further education and obtain and maintain employment. The Task Group members met with representatives of multiple levels of government, as well as representatives of Métis and Aboriginal groups. One of the biggest benefits of these interactions was that the Committee was able to make effective connections, and create beneficial partnerships. The Task Group focused on trying to establish how to best align programs to meet the needs of the vast majority of the at-risk youth. While a formal plan was never created, the group continued to share information with community organizations, ensuring access to this information by the service providers who, in turn, could facilitate access to this information for their clients.

#### 1.4 Methodology

The main research activities completed for this project were a review of documents and consultations with key stakeholder groups. Consultations were undertaken with a range of stakeholders, including:

- Youth and young adults between the ages of 15 and 30 residing in Edmonton or the surrounding area (referred to interchangeably as youth or young adults);
- Service providers and youth-serving agencies that provide relevant employment-related programs and services for youth and young adults;
- Local employers and stakeholders; and
- Philanthropic organization members.

The total number of interviews completed is presented in Table 1-1.

**Table 1-1  
Consultation Participants**

<b>Participant Populations</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>
Local Employers	10
Local Service Providers/Youth-serving Agencies	12
Youth	30
Philanthropists	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>

#### 1.5 Research Considerations

The following report provides a background of youth/young adult employment in the Edmonton area, as well as a summary of major issues that were identified during the consultations and literature review. It is important to point out that the results reflect the opinions and experiences of a relatively small number of individuals representing each group. Therefore, the opinions included in this report are of those individuals consulted during the research process, and may not reflect the opinions of all individuals within each group. Furthermore, some of the findings could be directly related to specific characteristics of the youth interviewed and how they were identified as potential respondents.

For the purpose of this report the following additional considerations should be taken into account when interpreting the results:

- This report is not meant to publicize or recommend any particular agency or service provider;
- This report is not meant to be a study on the factors that result in youth becoming at-risk or the challenges youth at-risk face in general, but rather a report of the specific experiences youth at-risk have regarding employment in the Edmonton region;

- This report is not meant to be an in-depth study of why youth may lack certain attributes (i.e., work ethic, motivation, punctuality) or work experiences. Rather, the focus of the study was to document the challenges identified by the youth who participated, and the need to address these challenges;
- The research was not intended to be a comprehensive study of all the programs and services available to youth and young adults in the Edmonton area, nor was it meant to be an in-depth analysis of such programs. Therefore, the specific programs and services are not named in the report. Instead the focus was placed on the best practices associated with these programs and services.
- This report reflects the findings at the time that the research was undertaken; and
- Some statistics used throughout this report may already be out of date (e.g., Statistics Canada 2006 Census data) and as such, new trends may not have been fully captured by the data and literature available to the Consultant at the time the research was undertaken.

## 1.6 Participant Demographics

The youth, service providers and employers contacted regarding the *Edmonton Region Youth Profile Update 2008 Project* were eager to participate, contribute information and provide possible solutions to some of the challenges associated with the youth employment. Participants were also eager to learn the results of the study and many (11 out of 12) service providers, (22 out of 30) youth, and (5 out of 10) employers indicated they would like to attend a presentation of the findings.

### 1.6.1 Youth

The focus of this study was on youth-at-risk, defined as youth who met one or more of the following criteria:

- Immigrant and refugee youth;
- Youth with addiction-related barriers;
- Youth with alcohol-related birth injuries (e.g. FAS/FAE);
- Youth with disabilities;
- Aboriginal youth;
- Youth who are single parents; and
- Homeless or street-involved youth.

The youth participants had varying backgrounds and belonged to different at-risk groups. Of the youth interviewed, 11 were aged 15-19, 14 were aged 20-24, and 5 were aged 25-30. Approximately 18 youth were currently employed: 12 were employed on a full-time and 6 on a part-time basis. Half of the youth participants were First Nations, Métis, Inuit or Aboriginal, and four participants identified themselves as a member of a visible minority. About one-third of the participants

*“Employers have a different attitude towards Aboriginals. The sign will say they’re hiring and when they see me, they say they’re not hiring.” - Youth participant*

*“I have FAS. It affects my ability to remember and concentrate on one thing. I don’t know exactly what that means since I feel normal – aren’t I?” - Youth participant*

felt that their ethnic or racial background added barriers to obtaining employment or acquiring skills. Six of the 30 youth participants considered themselves to have a disability (long-term mental or physical challenge), and most of them felt it added barriers, such as not being able to read, write or concentrate well. Four (4) out of 30 youth participants felt that their religious beliefs or values presented barriers. One immigrant youth felt that when immigrants have an accent or do not understand English well, they are sometimes unfairly viewed as incompetent.

Interview results suggest that there was a marked difference between the attitude of immigrant youth and non-immigrant youth, and the types of barriers they faced. Immigrant youth were more focused on career goals and were motivated to achieve those goals, whereas non-immigrant youth were less likely to have identified or pursue long-term career goals for the future. The main barrier experienced by immigrant youth was related to language difficulties, whereas for non-immigrant youth the barriers were more often associated with drug-use.

Many service providers felt that over the past 5 years, the number of youth with barriers, and/or the number of barriers experienced by youth have increased due to the insufficient funding for mental health, housing, and social supports.

### **1.6.2 Employers**

Participating employers varied from having 20 or fewer employees, to having more than one thousand employees. All of them employed at least some workers aged 15-30.

Five of the employers had a workforce that consisted of employees between the ages 15-30 whereas the other half of employers mainly employed workers over 30 years of age. Of the six employers who stated they could recall how many employees aged 15 to 30 they had hired in the last 5 years, one had hired fewer than 50 youth, two had hired between 100 and 500, and three other employers had hired between 500 to 1000.

One-half of the employers (5 out of 10) stated they had youth concentrated in a particular area of the company, such as front-line service, event-based positions, and production and shipping. Employers offering services for young children or youth were more likely to employ younger workers, as they felt youth were better able to relate to this market demographic.

### **1.6.3 Service Providers & Youth-serving Agencies**

Service providers and youth-serving agencies included youth shelters, employment programs, life skills programs, social services, and educational institutions. The organizations were funded privately, publicly, or through a combination of both.

**SECTION 2: YOUTH ISSUES AND REALITIES IN EDMONTON AND AREA**

**2.1 The “Demographic Bomb” in Canada**

The ongoing demographic shift (or “demographic bomb”) being experienced in Canada’s workforce is the result of the well-documented aging baby-boom generation. At the same time, the older workforce has begun retiring at a younger age, on average, than was true of previous generations (R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd., 2003). In Edmonton the percentage of the population aged 65+ will increase from 11.6% in 2006 to 19.8% by 2041 (City of Edmonton, 2007). With Edmonton’s strong economic climate, an abundance of job opportunities but a tight labour market, a large portion of vacant positions will need to be filled by younger, but highly skilled people. Due to the aging workforce and labour shortages the number of foreign workers is increasing, creating a more culturally diverse Edmonton (Ibid).

Research has indicated that certain industries are seeing repercussions of the aging of their workforce far more dramatically than others. Those industries include agriculture, construction, educational services and transportation, all of which are critical components of Alberta’s economy (R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd., 2003).

**2.2 Edmonton’s Youth Population**

According to the 2006 Census, youth comprise nearly one-quarter (24.3%) of the City of Edmonton’s overall population, as shown in Table 2-1. This number is significantly higher than the national average of 20.4% (Statistics Canada, 2007). The number of youth aged 15-29 years of age increased since 2001 by 0.7% or 22,205.

**Table 2-1  
Edmonton Youth Population (2006)**

<b>Age Range</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Percentage of Total Edmonton Population (730,370 people)</b>
15-24 years	115,520	15.8%
25-29 years	61,880	8.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>177,400</b>	<b>24.3%</b>

Source: Statistics Canada i

Edmonton has a slightly higher proportion of teenagers than Calgary, and an appreciably higher proportion of young adults than either Calgary or the province of Alberta overall (City of Edmonton, 2006a). Youth and young adults are more likely to be living in poverty compared to the Canadian population overall with youth/young adults who are Aboriginal, immigrants, visible minorities and persons with disabilities much more likely to be poor than other youth/young adults.

Consistent with communities across Canada, the Edmonton Aboriginal community is younger than the overall population of the city. Twenty-nine percent (29.9%) of the Edmonton Aboriginal population falls between the ages of 15 and

29. As shown in Table 2-2, approximately 1 in 15 (6.7%) Edmonton youth are of Aboriginal descent. The percentage of youth who are Aboriginal has slightly decreased (by 1.1%) since 2001.

**Table 2-2  
Edmonton Aboriginal Youth Population**

Age Range	Population	Percentage of Total Edmonton Aboriginal Population (38,165)	Percentage of Total Edmonton Youth Population (177,400)
15-24 years	8,100	21.2%	4.6%
25-29 years	3,315	8.7%	1.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,415</b>	<b>29.9%</b>	<b>6.4%</b>

Source: Statistics Canada 2006 Census

As demonstrated in Table 2-3, there is an approximately equal balance of males to females in the youth population of Edmonton.

**Table 2-3  
Edmonton Youth Population by Gender and Aboriginal Identity**

Age Range	Aboriginal Youth Population	Percentage of Total Youth Population	Non-Aboriginal Population	Percentage of Total Youth Population	Total Youth Population	Percentage of Total Youth Population
Male youth total	5,610	3.2%	83,975	47.3%	89,585	50.5%
Male 15-24 yrs	3,990	2.2%	54,025	30.5%	58,015	32.7%
Male 25-29 yrs	1,620	0.9%	29,950	16.9%	31,570	17.8%
Female youth total	5,805	3.3%	82,015	46.2%	87,820	49.5%
Female 15-24 yrs	4,115	2.3%	53,400	30.1%	57,515	32.4%
Female 25-29 yrs	1,690	1.0%	28,615	16.1%	30,305	17.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,415</b>	<b>6.4%</b>	<b>165,990</b>	<b>93.6%</b>	<b>177,405</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Statistics Canada 2006 Census

Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

### **2.3 Youth Employment**

According to the 2007 Labour Force Survey (LFS), youth comprise 18.4% of the Alberta's working age population, higher than the national average of 16.4%. The employment rate for Alberta youth was also highest in Canada at 66.9% (Alberta Employment & Immigration, 2007).

Despite the low unemployment rate in Canada, the youth unemployment rate, at 10.6%, remains almost double that of the adult rate (6%) (Statistics Canada, 2007b). From 1997 to 2004, the number of jobs for youth and young adults rose

by 21%, compared with a growth rate of just under 16% for adults aged 25 and over (Statistics Canada, 2005).

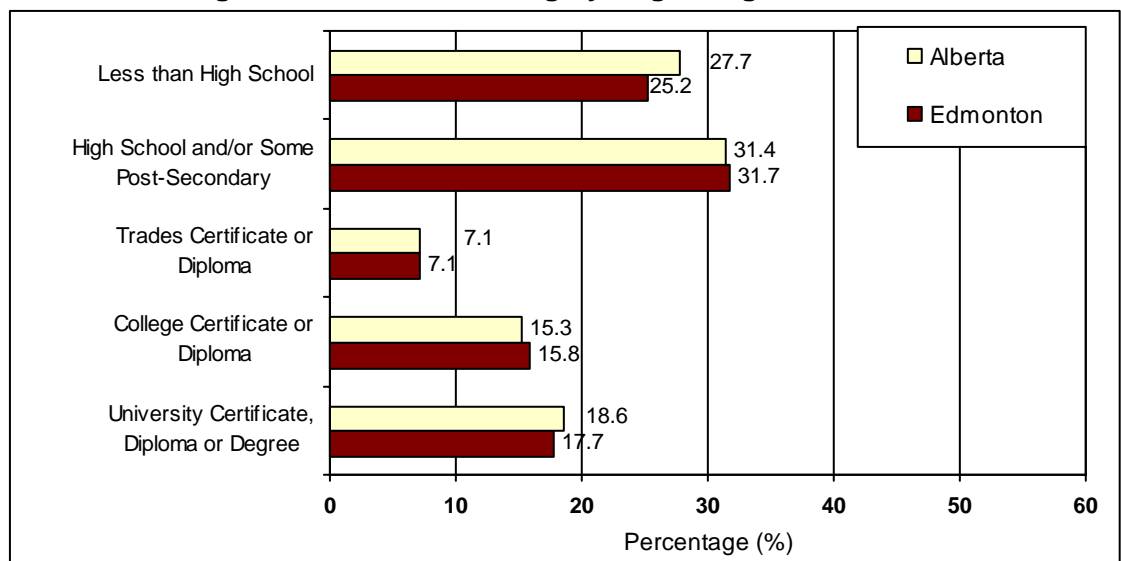
Alberta's economy has been one of the fastest growing in Canada, at 5.1% increase per year for the past 5 years. Thus, Alberta's unemployment rate is one of the lowest in Canada, at 3.7% (Statistics Canada, 2008). The labour market in Alberta has created a low youth unemployment rate. In 2007/08, there were 67,274 apprenticeship registrations. In that year, an additional 6,000 apprenticeship technical training seats were available as compared to the previous year.

## 2.4 Educational Attainment

Canada has a lower high school graduation rate (75%) than the average for OECD countries (82%) (Taylor et al. 2004). With respect to high school, Alberta has the highest drop-out rates of all the Canadian provinces and the rates are much higher for males (13%) than for females (7%) (Shaeinks et al. 2006). While Alberta's drop-outs were more likely to be working than high school graduates in other provinces, the unemployment rate for drop-outs is double (19%) that of youth who complete high school in Alberta. While Alberta has the highest workforce participation rate in Canada, it has the third lowest percentage of Albertan youth and young adults pursuing post-secondary studies (Alberta Advanced Education, 2006).

Overall, young adults in the Edmonton area between the ages of 15 to 34 are more likely to complete high school education compared with the Alberta provincial average, and are equally as likely to receive a university certificate, diploma or degree.

**Chart 2-4**  
**Highest Level of Schooling by Region Ages 15-34**



Source: Statistics Canada 2006 Census Data  
Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding error

Aboriginal youth are less likely to complete high school than non-Aboriginal youth, although school attendance among Aboriginal youth has risen substantially over the past two decades (City of Edmonton, 2006).

## **SECTION 3: YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT EMPLOYMENT SERVICES**

### **3.1 Services for Youth and Young Adults**

The Edmonton Inter-Agency Youth Services Association's Directory for Youth lists services and programs addressing the following areas:

- Aboriginal services;
- Abuse;
- Addictions and supports;
- Basic needs (housing, food, clothing);
- Crisis, distress and suicide;
- Disabilities;
- Employment, education and life skills;
- Family support and child care;
- Financial assistance;
- Gay, lesbian, transgender and bi-sexual support;
- Health (mental and physical);
- Legal and advocacy;
- Immigrant and newcomers;
- Prostitution;
- Recreation and fitness; and
- Shelters.

For the specific names of these programs and services, see Appendix B. Participants mentioned a variety of programs and services as being effective. However, despite the variety of services, youth had a limited awareness of and access to the range of services.

### **3.2 Best Practices in Youth Employment Service Delivery**

Youth and young adults were asked, based on their experiences, what services would work best to help them prepare for employment, and what elements should go into a service to help youth when looking for or preparing for a job.

Training and programs focusing on both employment and life skills were identified by youth and service providers as the best way to both prepare youth for employment and to help them maintain their jobs. Additionally, services providing both employment and life skills were mentioned by youth most often, and were of the highest rated. In fact, 27 of the youth participants had accessed some type of career or employment services. This represents a substantial improvement over the previous research in 2004, where few of the youth interviewed had accessed career and/or employment services.

When asked what information would be helpful in preparing for a job or finding/keeping a job, 63% of young adults cited résumé writing and interview skills. Other common responses included assistance in finding jobs and life skills training (verbal, interpersonal, writing and organizational skills), and assistance in discovering what job/career suits or interests them best.

The main factor identified by service providers/youth-serving agencies as impacting service delivery of young adult employment programs was funding and

its impact on program and staff continuity. This topic is further discussed in Section 4.7.

### **3.3 Best Practices in Education Programming**

Most youth/young adults (70%) felt that school had taught them general life skills: appropriate behaviour, such as respect; adherence to a routine of getting up in the morning and attending classes; and good hygiene. They also indicated that the Career and Life Management classes (CALM) provided helpful information which was useful outside of school, such as writing résumés and business letters; financial management; and conflict resolution. Participants also cited other academic courses as being useful for employment (e.g., Math, English), but that not all learning had been helpful in dealing with real-world experiences.

Only two out of 30 youth mentioned having participated in a work experience program. Many of the youth showed a high level of interest in career-related aptitude tests available through career counseling, in which their skills and interests are assessed to discover and obtain information on jobs/careers which suit or interest them best. Career counseling has been found to be an essential tool for assisting youth in making education and career choices; it can also be helpful to youth from disadvantaged backgrounds in accessing information they may not know of, or be able to access otherwise (Bell & O'Reilly, 2008). Despite the interest, none of the youth interviewed mentioned they had participated in a career-related aptitude test. This finding is consistent with that of Bell and Bezanson (2006), who found that few students access services such as career counseling if they are not mandatory.

### **3.4 Accessing Targeted Programs and Services**

Youth were asked what resources and services were available to help them overcome difficulties they face when looking for employment. They mentioned a range of different programs and resources that included employment services, on-line information resources, and support or counseling services.

When asked if they have needs that were not being met by existing community resources, twenty of the youth mentioned one or more of the following: housing, food services, recreational and social facilities that are affordable and stay open longer and more often, funding, help with school curriculum, more social workers, and parents needing to encourage their children to take more courses and complete school.

Six of the employers interviewed were aware of and had used the programs or services that helped employers hire youth.

Of the service providers/youth-serving agencies interviewed, seven had provided the following employment services to employers: preparing youth for the workforce (job search and maintenance techniques, résumé writing, safety modules, including first aid courses); screening and providing workers; screening and liaising between youth and employers, including resolving problems; and on-

site coaching and support for new youth employees. Agencies supporting youth with disabilities also aided in job modification.

Interviewed employers identified different methods as the best way to let employers know about the existence of these programs including: mail outs, job fairs, on-line, civic involvement, and phoning. Posters were considered by youth to be the most effective way to inform them about employment services.

Suggested locations for posters that are targeted toward youth included youth “hang-outs”; around Edmonton’s downtown; public libraries; youth shelters; buses and bus stops; shopping malls; and the river valley (where numerous youth spend time or live). Newspaper, word of mouth, school, radio stations geared towards youth, text messaging and social networking sites (such as Facebook) were the next most commonly cited suggestions for informing youth about employment services.

In general, participants were concerned that more youth are presenting with mental health issues and/or are street-entrenched than in previous years. Furthermore, youth with mental health issues, as well as other at-risk groups such as Aboriginal, immigrant, and learning-disabled youth were believed to be harder to reach and therefore, less likely to access programs and services for help.

#### **SECTION 4: IDENTIFIED ISSUES AFFECTING YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT EMPLOYMENT**

Alberta's economy is currently booming and there are numerous job opportunities. Twenty-one of the youth felt that it was "very easy" or "somewhat easy" to find a job, mostly because of the booming economy and 16 of the respondents felt it was easy to keep the job. Nineteen of the youth felt that employers are "very receptive" and "somewhat receptive" to hiring youth, while nine felt that employers were "unreceptive" and "very unreceptive". Job retention rather than attainment appears to be more of a challenge for the youth in Edmonton.

Sixteen out of the 30 youth/young adults who participated in this study felt that employers' views of youth varied depending on the circumstances. Employers viewed young adults positively when they worked well, had a good attitude and proved themselves trustworthy. Youth participants were aware that they sometimes lacked a strong work ethic, such as being reliable and responsible, resulting in employers viewing youth employees negatively. Additional reasons youth believed that employers viewed them negatively included: insufficient work experience, street involvement, non-conforming appearances, and possession of a criminal record. A couple of youth felt that they are not accepted in the same way as adults and that they are often looked at as if they should be in school rather than working.

Perceived benefits young adults bring to an organization highlighted by research participants included: energy, efficiency, physical fitness and strength, innovative ideas, adaptability, friendliness, and "less grumpiness" than older employees. In addition, youth felt they can provide services to a company for a longer period of time. Interestingly, only one of the youth interviewed mentioned that youth are more technologically savvy than the older generation, whereas employers listed technology skills as the second highest advantage in hiring youth. Similarly, the majority of youth surveyed in youth employment studies in other cities felt that a major benefit of hiring youth was that they are more technologically inclined. A possible explanation as to why the youth respondents in this study did not mention technological skills may be related to their background and circumstances as at-risk youth. Youth-at-risk may have fewer opportunities to develop and practice their technology skills, perhaps resulting in a disadvantage in terms of employment. Service providers and employers indicated the following benefits to hiring youth: less expensive labour; more time available to work longer or work evening shifts; teachable; and the intrinsic satisfaction of knowing they are giving youth a chance.

Although there are numerous benefits to hiring youth, participants also listed several disadvantages, such as: inconsistent loyalty/commitment; insufficient work experience, lack of work ethic and professionalism; the tendency to make their own hours; conflict with school schedule; unreliable; disrespectful; unrealistic salary and advancement expectations; poor social skills; greater need for direction; and overconfidence. The advantages and disadvantages to hiring

youth as identified in the current study are consistent with similar studies conducted by R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. in other locations.

The majority of young adults and employers agreed that showing up in-person is the most effective way for making contact with potential employers. The second most common response for effective contact according to youth was by phone, whereas employers mentioned websites.

For employers, the top three challenges to employing youth were: 1) excessive number of available jobs, leading to frequent job changes; 2) high money/wage expectations; and 3) underdeveloped work ethic (responsibility, awareness, reliability). Additionally, due to the *Privacy Act*, employers experienced challenges in contacting and obtaining references for younger applicants.

Twenty-four of the youth indicated they have thought about their long-term career goals or what they will do in the future. Youth felt the two most important factors that would help them achieve their long-term goals were completing school and being more financially stable. The remaining youth, all homeless, did not think about long-term careers but rather focused on living from day to day.

The opinions of representatives from service providers and youth-serving agencies were split on whether youth were entering positions with long-term career potential. Representatives of organizations that offer workplace training/internships/apprenticeships interacted with young adults who were focused on completing their programs and preparing to enter a career, rather than just a job, and therefore were more likely to answer that youth are entering careers with long-term potential. Representatives of service providers / youth-serving agencies not offering such programs were less likely to answer that youth are entering positions with long-term career potential. Youth-at-risk were more likely to have "just a job" rather than a career because they were focused on immediate money and stability. Some youth were not entering long-term careers because they felt there were no opportunities to do so, since not all companies offered long-term careers. Other reasons mentioned by youth as to why they were not entering long-term careers relate to youth not knowing what they want to do, and wanting to explore their options. Nine of ten employers felt that youth did not understand upward mobility and salary progression. They expressed that youths' salary expectations were too high, youth wanted raises and promotions faster than was realistic, and / or youth were reluctant to invest time and energy into learning about the job and organization.

The following are the major issues that were identified as impacting youth and young adults' ability to obtain and maintain employment in the Edmonton region:

- Issue #1: Mental health support;
- Issue #2: Housing or permanent address;
- Issue #3: Attitudes toward work and expectations of youth;
- Issue #4: Work experience;
- Issue #5: Employability skills;

*"I don't think about my long-term plans because I plan only by the day – that's the way on the street."*  
– Youth participant

*"The youth I see choosing long-term careers have more motivation or patience to put towards training."*  
- Service provider

*"When graduates [leave] our 16 week program, they go into trades and their potential is very bright."*  
- Service provider

- Issue #6: Awareness of available employment services;
- Issue #7: Funding for service providers;
- Issue #8: Transportation; and
- Issue #9: Affordable child care.

Each of the identified issues is discussed in further detail in the following sub-sections. The discussion includes a brief summary of the issues, identified programs and services in the Edmonton area, gaps, barriers and priorities; as well as recommendations to address these challenges. The order the issues are presented in does not signify the importance of one issue over the other. The challenges in this report were cited by a number of stakeholders and corroborated in other sources.

It should be noted that the issues raised in the consultations may or may not factor in the recent or ongoing improvements or changes to services for youth and young adults in the Edmonton region, as the service providers may be actively taking steps to alleviate some of these challenges.

#### **4.1 Issue #1: Mental Health Support**

There is a clear need for mental health services targeted to youth: 1.2 million young Canadians and their families live with mental illness; 15% of children and youth have a mental disorder; the average age of onset for depression is 23; the average age of onset for anxiety disorder is 12; and the average age of onset is 18 for substance abuse (Government of Alberta, 2006). There is a correlation between youth who are considered “high risk” and the probability of mental health challenges (Yates et al., 1998; Patton, G.C. et al., 2002; Sarri and Philips, 2004; Husler and Plancherel, 2008; Wachter and Bouck, 2008).

##### **Low-income youth**

Children who grow up poor are more likely to earn less as adults, complete fewer years of formal education, and face more health issues than their counterparts from higher-income families. Poverty also contributes to poor social, emotional and behavioural outcomes for children and hinders cognitive development (Golonka & Hoffman, 2008).

##### **Homeless youth**

Homeless youth are at significant risk of developing mental health problems. As Hausman and colleagues (1993) observed, almost all negative high-risk factors in mothers, children and adolescents come together in situations of homelessness, particularly concerning family stability and proper care-giving. Homeless youth, as observed by Taylor and colleagues (2004) tend to have few goals, a distrust of authorities, and unstable friendships that lack mutual trust.

##### **Aboriginal youth**

Aboriginal youth in Canada are at particular risk of facing mental health issues, and are five to six times more likely to die from suicide than the general Canadian population (Community Health Programs Directorate, 2001). However, the suicide rate among Aboriginal youth in Canada is high only in particular

*“[They] want to try different things out, [and] don’t know what their ultimate goal is.” - Service provider*

*“Mental health is more of an issue today due to the stress related to housing, transportation and cost of living in general.” - Service provider*

*“I had some personal issues that prevented me, distracted me [from participating in employment services].” -Youth participant*

Aboriginal communities and not as high in others. Chandler and Lalonde (1998) suggest that the more connected an Aboriginal community is to traditional culture, the lower the suicide rate in that community. This is corroborated by American evidence (Rieckmann et al, 2004), which suggests that an increased sense of Navajo cultural identity among Navajo youth is moderately associated with a lower rate of depression. Libby and colleagues (2008) suggest that childhood physical and sexual abuse is a significant predictor for anxiety, depression, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among Aboriginal youth in the United States.

### **Immigrants and newcomers**

Edmonton is home to a large, multicultural community. Evidence suggests that immigrants and refugees—including children and adolescents—may be more susceptible to depression and/or anxiety, including PTSD (Levecque et al., 2003). Szalacha et al. (2003) notes that the perception of and concern about, discrimination is negatively associated with self-esteem, stress, and depression in Puerto Rican youth in the United States. Cultural conflict, particularly among immigrants and refugees from more conservative countries, can also play a role in the development of mental illness in a way not faced by residents of most Western countries due to common cultural values. Cespedes et al. (2008) and van Bergen et al. (2006) suggest that the conflicting cultural norms of children and adolescents of some immigrant and refugee parents—particularly those coming from more socially conservative cultures—place those children at risk of developing depression and moreover, at a higher risk of suicide. Refugees are in particular risk of developing PTSD, especially if they come from war-torn areas or have experienced significant military conflict. Specifically, factors like severe life trauma and unresolved family reunion are risk factors for PTSD (Lie, 2006); as well, youths' specific experiences with war—particularly youths who have lost a parent or witnessed war-related trauma—had higher depressive symptoms than other refugee youths (Zvizdic et al., 2002). However, as Slodnjak and colleagues (2002) observe, the association between traumatic events and depression/PTSD in refugees is not a causal one.

Children of immigrants or immigrant youth are more likely to obtain higher education than their Canadian counterparts. A recent study found that 79% of visible-minority immigrant youth aspired to obtain at least one university degree, compared with 57% of Canadian-born non-visible minority students (Statistics Canada, 2006b). While immigrants may have high aspirations for education, there are systemic, cultural and social barriers which prevent them from achieving those aspirations, such as lack of information, non-eligibility for scholarships and awards (Looker & Lowe, 2001) as well as language difficulties.

#### 4.1.1 Identified Assets

A variety of services are available for issues related to abuse, addiction, crisis / distress / suicide, life skills, family support and child care, health, immigration, as well as gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered (GLBT) support, (see Appendix B for more details). There are also services specific to recent immigrants; both settlement services and employment services.

*“They constantly blamed problems on me because I didn’t have enough experience, like customer skills.” – Youth participant*

*“When [youth] have personal baggage, it affects their ability to maintain their job, therefore they need to be taught life skills.” – Service provider*

#### 4.1.2 Identified Gaps, Needs, Priorities

Budget cuts in Edmonton's social services, mental health services, and long-term programs from several years ago continue to have repercussions on youth residing in Edmonton and area. Service providers expressed concerns that basic or foundational programs to address mental health issues are lacking and/or are insufficient to address the current needs of youth. Several service providers and youth-serving agencies commented that the number of youth with mental issues is increasing. Youth participants identified personal issues, instability and lifestyle (drugs) as the major factors that made it most difficult for youth to obtain and maintain employment. Numerous studies suggest that drug use affects mental well-being (Patton et al., 2002; Husler & Plancherel, 2008), which in turn can impact employment.

#### 4.1.3 Recommendations:

The following recommendations are made for increasing mental health support for youth and young adults:

1. Increase the capacity of social services and related organizations to better serve youth with issues related to mental health, lifestyle choices, cultural and substances/abuse issues.
2. Provide more one-on-one mentoring and support for young adults.
3. Build flexibility into programs, especially programs addressing substance abuse treatments.
4. Increase participation in life skills programs.

#### 4.2 Issue #2: Housing or Permanent Address

The lack of affordable housing was identified as an issue in the *Edmonton Region Plan for Coordination of Youth Services 2004-2007*, but was found to be an even greater challenge in the 2008 study. Despite an unprecedented level of construction activity for residential buildings over the past few years, strong population growth and rising home prices have reduced the amount of affordable and available housing in the Edmonton area. Meanwhile, construction costs have risen, contributing to the recent downturn in the housing activities. In addition, rising construction/land costs have contributed to an escalation in rents for both new and existing rental housing units. (City of Edmonton, 2007). It is anticipated that the majority of younger workers (both foreign and domestic) expected to move to Edmonton will have lower income levels, which could impact the type of housing demand in the area (more affordable, multi-unit, apartment housing) as well as their ability to obtain it. Thus, the probability of homelessness and poverty in the City of Edmonton is expected to increase (City of Edmonton, 2007). However, there are numerous initiatives to provide low-income, special and transitional housing in Edmonton. For example, the Edmonton Community Plan on Housing and Support Services 2005-2009 outlines a \$435 million plan to advance efforts to address affordable housing and homelessness issues in Edmonton (EJPCOH, 2003). Nevertheless, the number of housing units required will out-number the housing available, especially for low income households.

*"[Youth] need someone to care about them, just someone to talk to."* - Youth participant

*"If youth are homeless, they are less likely to prioritize participating in a program because they are too busy trying to find a place to stay."* – Service provider.

*“The [program] did not accept me. They said the reason was because I did not have a stable place to live and they didn’t know if I would show up for the program.” - Youth participant*

*“I need a home so I can stay away from people who have the ability to bring me down or peer pressure me into things like drugs.” - Youth participant*

*“I got kicked out again of my home. I called my employer to tell him I will be late. He asked why and I did not want to share my personal life. We got into an argument because he was not understanding.” - Youth participant*

*“Youths’ individual attitude and passion could contribute to youth retaining their jobs.” - Employer*

The lack of affordable housing was identified as a barrier to youth employment. As mentioned earlier in this section, homelessness is related to mental illness and mental instability leads to employment challenges. Youth felt that having a home made finding and keeping a job easier (and conversely lack of housing made it much more difficult). Homelessness or lack of permanent address can cause significant employment problems in the following ways:

- Difficulty participating in job and life skills services and programs;
- Difficulty choosing healthy environments and peer groups;
- Finding or maintaining employment, due to limited access to phone or internet for contacting employers;
- Inability to get sufficient rest so youth can get up the next morning and maintain a good hygiene; and
- Lack of understanding between employers and employees.

#### 4.2.1 Identified Assets

A variety of services, such as shelters, are available for issues related to homelessness (see Appendix B for more details). Only one service provider was mentioned by the participants. Nevertheless, shelters should not be viewed as an alternative to stable housing.

#### 4.2.2 Identified Gaps, Needs, Priorities

Lack of affordable housing remains one of the most significant gaps in resources with respect to youth employment.

#### 4.2.3 Recommendations

Major recommendations that were identified through the consultations related to housing and homelessness included the following:

1. Edmonton requires further low-income/subsidized housing to meet current demands for youth. Subsidized housing could be linked with employment programming to address the needs of tenants and to provide a continuum of support.
2. Youth without housing stability often require a place they can use as a contact point with employers. Service agencies could be encouraged to act as employer contact points for youth.

### 4.3 Issue #3: Attitudes toward work and expectations of youth

A main disadvantage to hiring youth was their attitude and underdeveloped work ethic. Specifically, insufficient commitment or loyalty; motivation; self-discipline; respect for employer; responsibility; and reliability were identified by employers, service providers and youth themselves. Issues related to work ethic contribute to cross-generational conflict between employers and youth employees. When asked if the expectations of youth/young adults regarding employment are different as compared to five years ago, eight of employers responded that they had changed, with three indicating that due to the labour shortage, they have dropped their expectations. Youths’ expectations for higher salary and faster

promotion were also considered unrealistic, considering their attitudes and motivation toward employment and the fact that the wages in the oil and gas industry are inflated. The most common reason cited as to why the interviewed youth left their jobs was the expectation of the higher wages. Youth also wanted a better work-life balance than older generations. Employers emphasized that youth and young adults could be better prepared for the workforce by developing their work ethic. Youth/young adults also recognized that a good work ethic is crucial for maintaining employment. The greatest challenge faced by service providers when providing employment service, was youth following through with employment. Finding a good fit between a worker and an employer could improve youths' commitment which could be facilitated through career counseling, as mentioned in Section 3.3.

*"A frequent comment we hear from employers is that we can always train skills but if youth don't come with a basic work ethic, then it is all for naught."* - Service provider

#### 4.3.1 Identified Assets

Respondents did not identify any programs or services that currently address youth attitudes and motivation toward work or their expectations. In general, youth in school must demonstrate a certain level of work ethic to be able to complete the grade levels. CALM classes offered in the school system provide students with the skills they require to have healthy interactions with others, which could to some degree, alleviate the potential for conflicts due differences in attitude or work ethic.

#### 4.3.2 Identified Gaps, Needs, Priorities

Employers and youth alike emphasized that youth could be better prepared for the workforce by developing their work ethic. According to a recent study (Venture Research & Development, 2007), young workers' views about motivation and commitment to their employer differ from those of the older generation. Youths' views also differ about career planning, hours of work, compensation, and recognition, which may also be factors affecting how youth perceive employment. These differences reflect world events, economic conditions and the parenting styles they grew up with, creating cross-generational differences that sometimes lead to conflict.

*"If employers are working with youth-at-risk, they need to know about youth-serving agencies."*  
- Service provider

Understanding what shapes youth motivation, values and approaches to work, will aid in developing strategies to effectively work with youth, including fostering a better work ethic (Venture, 2001). For example employers can learn how youth define a "good work ethic", share employer expectations with youth, and then find some common ground. If youth are perceived as having low motivation and being demanding, this behaviour may be because they are from a more affluent generation and have not had to "struggle" as much as previous generations. However, this may not be the case for youth-at-risk, who deal with numerous barriers and encounter many obstacles. Their lower motivation may be caused by other factors.

If a job involves repetitive tasks, perhaps positions or job responsibilities can be rotated. Additionally, youth emphasized the importance of receiving guidance from parents or career counselors to assist them in finding out what jobs and careers would best suit their interests, and suggested they would be more able to commit to a job if they enjoy it more.

*“Employers need to build a supportive environment. Youth need to feel connected to people and their boss and see their boss less as a figurehead. Bosses need to invest in the youth.” - Service provider*

Participants suggested that employers could make the workplace more youth-friendly by employing more young adults; creating a good work environment to include open dialogue; talking to employees and taking the time to get to know them; and listening to their employees. Suggestions for improving relations included treating employees with respect; fostering the spirit of teamwork; providing employee independence/freedom to express themselves; and developing/using innovative reward systems. An overwhelming number of youth preferred to work with peers in the same age range, especially with their friends. Fun and socialization is a crucial component for this age group. Other suggestions include providing transportation services (discussed in detail in Section 4.8); flexible scheduling; creating a safe work environment; not discriminating based on race or sexual preference; and switching roles so a task is less mundane. Youth made suggestions about how to make the workplace more youth-friendly while understanding that work productivity is a priority:

If young workers appear to be lacking commitment, employers must keep in mind that this generation was raised in a multi-media environment and thus, may require additional stimulation to stay engaged.

Understanding generational differences was commonly mentioned as being important to helping youth/young adults succeed in the workplace. Service providers/youth agencies suggested that employers should make an effort to relate to youth and understand cross-generational differences in order to better manage conflicts. Youth also identified a lack of support to help them deal with conflicts at work that may arise with employers or co-workers. Reducing conflict and consequently having pleasant co-worker interactions was considered important by youth in this study. In a similar study, a respondent suggested contacting the services that provide advice on workplace and cross-generational conflicts.

#### 4.3.3 Recommendations

1. Attitudes toward work was perceived as something to be fostered throughout a child's development and guided by parents and schools. However, employers can take initiative in encouraging the development of youths' work ethic in a variety of ways. Various employment services throughout Edmonton could make information, programs, workshops, and newsletters available to employers and youth with respect to fostering and teaching a more positive attitude towards work.
2. Increase awareness among teachers and parents that youth attitude toward work is one of the major employment issues identified for the Edmonton region.
3. Provide affordable and accessible training on conflict resolution, including cross-generational conflict.
  - Encourage a youth-driven initiative to create educational materials, such as videos on how to deal with conflict at the workplace, and advertise it through media popular with youth, such as YouTube, a video sharing website.
4. Improve awareness of opportunities for career exploration that may assist youth in finding a career field that would trigger their interest and

motivation through available career counseling, work experience or internships programs.

5. Better prepare youth for the workforce by fostering more realistic expectations of job requirements and work-related topics such as wages. Also, to reduce the unrealistic expectations of youth for higher wages, provide information and opportunities for youth to better understand the labour market and employer expectations.

#### **4.4 Issue #4: Work Experience**

Secondary research indicates that lack of work experience (including lack of education) is a principal labour market barrier for young adults in Canada (Human Resources Development Canada, 1999). A national level consultation with stakeholders across the country found that many youth, employers and other Canadians say the greatest challenge facing young people overall is getting their first job (Human Resources Development Canada, 2000). Work experience is vital to school-to-work transitioning and needs to be made available at the high school level (Bell & O'Reilly, 2008). For Canadian youth, the school-to-work transition is a difficult and lengthy process and takes about two years longer than it did 20 years ago, averaging eight years (Statistics Canada, 2000). Consistent and sustained career education and career development services are needed to support youth during their school-to-work transition (Bell & O'Reilly, 2008).

Insufficient work experience—specifically technical and customer service skills—was also identified as a disadvantage to hiring youth although interestingly, employers were the least concerned about work experience out of all the respondent groups consulted. A possible explanation is that youth can gain work experience on the job, particularly soft skills, whereas work ethic is developed as part of the overall life experience. Representatives of service providers and youth-serving agencies commented that youths' lack of experience might make them less attractive as employees because they require more supervision and guidance. In the situation where employers are often under-staffed, as in Edmonton, the need for additional supervision is something employers can have difficulty providing.

##### **4.4.1 Identified Assets**

There are hundreds perhaps thousands, of school-to-work transition programs and practices in Canada. In Edmonton there are a variety of programs which offer work experience and allow participants to connect with employers and gain practical workforce experience. These programs provide initial introduction to a selection of occupations and allow youth and young adults to understand what is expected of them in these occupations. Relevant programs and services available to youth and young adults in Edmonton include those listed under employment/education/life skills in Appendix B, as well as school-to-work experience programs such as CALM classes and Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP).

#### 4.4.2 Identified Gaps, Needs and Priorities

As mentioned earlier, there are many school-to-work transition programs and practices available but they lack a centralized strategy (Bell & O'Reilly, 2008). Furthermore, at-risk youth are less likely to complete high school. Other programs are available that provide work experience opportunities—however, participation in these programs tends to be low. Many of the young adults who participated in the consultation felt that insufficient work experience was a barrier to participation in the local workforce. Work experience programs do exist to assist youth but most youth interviewed at the time of this study had not participated in these programs. Rather, they had participated in various programs that focused on basic life skills.

Only two employers interviewed had a specific training / orientation program for youth. When asked what role employers could take in preparing new employees for their job, respondents in all groups suggested providing in-depth introductory training that offers step-by-step examples that allow new employees to develop an understanding of their tasks. Youth were open to receiving more training, especially if there were incentives such as financial rewards. Participants also stated that a thorough and effective general orientation was necessary, in which expectations and a job description were clearly defined. Spending time with youth and providing mentoring and good leadership was also considered a crucial role of the employer. Making youth feel wanted and needed; being a supportive and positive role model; and transitioning them into the workplace so they get used to the tasks and routine were also cited as ways employers can help youth integrate successfully into the workplace.

#### 4.4.3 Recommendations

Major recommendations for addressing insufficient work experience include the following:

1. Increase the community's awareness of, and participation in, currently available work experience opportunities for youth. Also, increase the range and type of work experience opportunities in various industries and occupations. Specific actions could include:
  - Encourage youth/young adults to participate in work experience placement programs (such as Registered Apprenticeship Programs) in sectors that are expanding or experiencing human resource shortages in the region.
  - Increase collaboration between schools, local businesses and governments to offer work experience programs. Look at best practices currently being conducted—including work done by the Alberta Employment and Immigration, Administration Unit which is a leading innovator in terms of linking youth to work experience.
  - Engage employers in the development and delivery of youth employment programs for example, through research aimed at exploring employer needs and how they could be addressed as well as how to increase participation in employment programs. This will help to ensure their issues related to employing youth are

addressed, and encourage buy-in and participation in new or existing programs and services.

- Consider incentives for employers who participate in youth work experience programs. Small to medium-sized employers who accept students for work experience may have substantial burden placed upon them. Therefore, the incentives, whether they are monetary or non-financial—such as community recognition awards, community dinners or free advertising and promotion—could provide support for employers and encourage participation.
  - Expand marketing of youth/young adults to employers, as some employers may be hesitant to work with youth (especially high school drop-outs or at-risk youth). Employer training to overcome negative stereotypes associated with youth/young adults may be beneficial.
2. Encourage employers to provide more in-depth, hands-on and personal job training. Furthermore, increase the opportunities for employers and youth/young adults to partake in the training by offering it at various times and making it affordable.

#### **4.5 Issue #5: Employability Skills**

Responses among employers were mixed when asked if the skill level of young employees has changed compared to five years ago. Three employers felt it was higher and that youth were better educated, skilled, and had more career counseling. Two employers felt that the skill levels were lower in terms of problem-solving, customer service, coping, and the lack of interpersonal skills.

As previously mentioned, a higher proportion of youth are not completing high school, resulting in lower levels of reading and writing skills. Non-completion of high school puts youth at a greater disadvantage. An education accountability study by the provincial government found that employer satisfaction with the skills and quality of work of recent Alberta high school graduates is down 10%, compared with two years ago.<sup>3</sup>

During the consultation process, youth, employers, and service providers were asked to identify the top five employability skills youth needed to learn in order to be prepared for the workforce. As demonstrated in Table 4-1 below, youth, employers, and service providers agreed on four of the top five employability skills: working with others/teams, behaving appropriately, problem solving skills, and oral communication. Planning and time management were considered important by employers and service providers/youth-serving agencies, whereas youth felt writing skills were more important. Thinking and problem solving skills tied with planning and time management as the fifth choice for most important skills by service providers/youth-serving agencies.

**Table 4-1**

<sup>3</sup> Calgary Herald. October 21, 2008, Employers less satisfied with Alberta's high school grads.

**Top Five Employability Skills Identified as Important for Youth/Young Adults to Prepare Them for the Workforce**

<b>Youth</b>	<b>Employer</b>	<b>Service Provider</b>
Working with others	Working in teams	Working with others
Behaving appropriately	Behaving appropriately	Behaving appropriately
Problem solving skills	Problem solving skills	Problem solving skills
Oral communication skills	Oral communication skills	Oral communication skills
Written communication skills	Planning and time management	Planning and time management. Thinking/problem solving skills

**4.5.1 Identified Assets**

A variety of initiatives exist in Edmonton to provide education and guidance to youth/young adults on valuable workplace and employability skills. Participants were aware of programs offering employability skills. Additional programs and resources identified by the research are listed under employment/ education/ life skills in Appendix B. There are a few agencies known to participants while the remainder appears to be relatively unknown. Fourteen agencies were named although many more services exist. However, it should not be expected that youth are aware of all programs and services available in Edmonton.

**4.5.2 Identified Gaps, Needs, Priorities**

To obtain employment, respondents in all groups emphasized the need for more training on résumé and interview skills, which is consistent with findings of similar research conducted by R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. According to employers, schools could do more to address employability skills/gaps. Additionally, youth were noted as lacking life experience.

**4.5.3 Recommendations**

Four key recommendations related to training were generated from information obtained from the consultations and literature review and include the following:

1. Emphasize workforce/employability skills (interview, résumé writing, and life skills) required by local employers through existing programs that provide employment-related information to Edmonton and area youth/young adults through schools and/or employment and life skills agencies.
2. Increase awareness of services (including job skills training) provided by the various employment and life skills agencies.
3. Foster the provision of more work experience and opportunities with local employers to help youth and young adults gain experience in a workplace setting while also learning necessary employability skills.
4. As mentioned in Section 3.2, programs which offered both employability skills and life skills were rated as most effective by participants. Provide sufficient funding for continuation and/or expansion of such programs and use best practices as a model to increase the effectiveness of other programs.

#### **4.6 Issue #6: Awareness of Available Employment Services**

A major study (Canadian Policy Research Network [CPRN], 2008) recently released found that young people need help to identify and navigate learning pathways that lead to good jobs. Whereas young people used to follow more of a straight-line path from school-to-work, they are now “zig-zagging”; taking longer to complete their education and to establish themselves in the workforce. A key finding of the research was that career development programs and services can reduce drop-out rates, increase aspirations and achievement, help people find jobs that match their talents and interest, and help employers meet skill needs. Despite the fact that career development programs and services are effective, as mentioned in the previous section, youth are not taking advantage of these services if they are not mandatory.

Youth interviewed were aware of only the programs they were participating in and not aware of the wide spectrum of programs that exist in the Edmonton region. For example, most of the youth interviewed were not aware of the booklet “Directory of Youth Services 2008” provided by the Edmonton Inter-Agency Youth Services Association (EIYSA). As mentioned in Section 3.4, posters were considered by youth to be an effective way to inform them about employment services. Suggested locations for posters included youth “hang-outs” around Edmonton’s downtown; public libraries; youth shelters; buses and bus stops; shopping malls; and the river valley (where numerous youth spend time or live). Newspaper, word of mouth, school, radio stations geared towards youth, text messaging and social networking sites (such as Facebook) were the next most commonly cited suggestions for informing youth about employment services.

##### **4.6.1 Identified Assets**

As stated previously, a variety of services are available to youth/young adults for employment and life-skills related programs and services (see Appendix B for more details). Fourteen services were identified by the youth interviewed. This finding has two important considerations. First, the youth interviewed were identified through agencies/organizations involved in providing some of these services. Second, It is not reasonable to assume that youth would be aware of all the different programs and services as most would only access those in the immediate or nearby communities.

##### **4.6.2 Identified Gaps, Needs, Priorities**

There are numerous programs and services available, but underutilized by youth, as youth are not aware of these programs and services. Another challenge cited by some service providers/youth-serving agencies, is that many programs are “band-aid” attempts and fail to address deeper underlying problems or are not provided long-term funding. This issue is further discussed in Section 4.7. Respondents noted that long-term funding is needed to ensure programs and practices are sustainable and viable, a factor that is also supported by the literature (Bell & O’Reilly, 2008). Employment programs that are provincially or locally based are dependent on government funding and are vulnerable to shifts in government and government budget cycles (Bell & Bezanson 2006). Lack of

*“Youth don’t have the patience to wait, sometimes there’s too many questions, paper work and youth can’t get through them.” - Service provider*

consistency in services (e.g., changes to program name or change of contractors) creates a lack of awareness of the programs that exist or challenges to access them when they are needed (Bell and O'Reilly 2008).

Another concern raised by the participants is that youth from various backgrounds require programs which are tailored to their diversity and needs. For example, youth from low economic backgrounds require greater attention throughout childhood and primary and secondary schooling, and more support from counseling. They benefit from career-related options in high school (Bell & O'Reilly, 2008).

### **Aboriginal Youth**

Research suggests that tying work experience initiatives to Aboriginal communities and school-to-work programs should focus on learning goals and jobs, and balancing expectations from two cultures (CCL Lessons in Learning, 2005).

- A variety of programs exist for Aboriginal youth related to career exploration;
- Aboriginal Student Summer Employment Opportunities;
- Aboriginal Internship Program (for post-secondary graduates); and
- Tours for Tomorrow Program (provides tours to teach Aboriginal youth about potential City of Edmonton careers).

*“Youth who are able to share with someone issues or concerns at the workplace are more likely to keep their jobs.” - Service provider*

#### 4.6.3 Recommendations

Key recommendations resulting from the consultations related to participation in programs and services include:

1. Increase awareness of the variety of services and programs available, especially among youth and service providers/youth-serving agencies.
  - Create a position for a community liaison worker to promote available programs at the various shelters and drop-in centres; and
  - Advertising by methods discussed in Sections 3.4 and 4.6.
2. Increase opportunities for participation in programs and services.
  - Improve career and development services in schools. Examine successful programs to use as models for developing programming.
  - Make participation in career counselling mandatory in the schools;
  - Create more inclusive participation criteria;
  - Increase flexibility in programming length and schedule; and
  - Support existing life and employability skills training programs that provide funding to the attending youth, allowing them to keep up with their living expenses while participating in the program.

3. Concentrate on long-term planning in service delivery and provide continuous support for successful services rather than creating new ones.
4. Coordinate the timing of various complementary programs and services, taking into consideration the schedules of various programs to allow full-time employed youth to participate.
5. Maintain a comprehensive and current database of services and programs. Although the Directory of Youth Services by EIYSA is updated annually it does not list all of the available services.
6. Address the attitudes and behaviours of parents, teachers, employers and youth through promoting the advantages of accessing school-to-work opportunities, including work-experience programs.

#### **4.7 Issue #7: Funding for Service Providers**

Funding was identified by all service providers as a major factor that impacts service delivery of youth/young adult employment programs. Different types of funding were identified: direct funding; funding that does not have strict parameters (e.g., does not dictate the length of attendance by youth nor that participants must completely abstain from substance use); supplemental wage program; and partnerships or competitive wage rates for program staff. Funding can affect program/service availability and consistency.

##### 4.7.1 Identified Assets

One of the positive aspects of the booming Alberta economy<sup>4</sup> is that more funding has been available for some programs and services. The federal program offers supplemental wage program where youth attend life skills program to qualify for the supplemental wage. There are also programs offered through Employment Insurance which pays for tuition. Finally, the government harmonized regulations on Employment Insurance and increased supports, therefore waiting time and funding eligibility for participants has improved in certain work programs.

##### 4.7.2 Identified Gaps, Needs, Priorities

As mentioned in Section 4.6.2, inconsistent funding may result in lack of awareness of or access to, existing employment programs for youth. Service providers were concerned about inadequate funding for further training, basic supports such as transitional housing, outreach services and educational programs. Another concern was that funding is often based on a program's ability to meet specific success measures. The standard criteria for measuring outcomes are further education or employment. Service providers/youth-serving agencies suggested funding criteria need to be less stringent for programs that teach basic life skills to youth before they are prepared to continue education or obtain employment. Philanthropic organizations felt that lack of awareness of funding is a major gap in services.

*"It is grassroots ideas within an organization that work if implemented. I like social enterprises – the more we can sustain ourselves, the better."* – Service provider

*"Funding demands are high but funds are short and fundraising is already saturated in most communities."* – Philanthropist

<sup>4</sup> Note that, although this was the situation at the time of the research, the economic climate in Canada (and Alberta) has since experienced a downturn.

*“[We need] more money put into looking after those [disadvantaged] groups. More social agencies. No safety net for them. That is not about employment, it’s about looking after them. Not much political will to do that.” - Service provider*

Although Alberta is experiencing labour shortages, it does not mean that employment programs are not necessary. As one service provider expressed, *“both levels of government are aware enough that there’s more to an employment program than just placing someone in a job”*. While some participants felt that the various levels of governments were doing an adequate job of co-operating, others felt more is needed to respond to local needs and to meet broader goals at the national level.

A negative aspect of the booming economy for some service providers/youth-serving agencies has been that their operational costs have increased while funding has not grown to match these increases. Numerous negative factors were identified which impact service delivery such as lack of funding and other aspects (e.g., help with mental health issues or housing), as well as lack of employer awareness about the benefits of hiring youth including youth with a developmental disability. Another concern raised by a philanthropic organization is that the educational system is not educating youth on the voluntary sector as a career choice.

A project based funding approach is typically used for employment related programs and services, whereby funding is provided for a specified period of time on a program-by-program basis. This model can create difficulties in hiring and retaining adequate number of qualified staff in youth programs. Continuity in staffing ensures that long-term relationships can be built, which is one of the most effective ways of reaching youth. Also, having long-term staff builds community knowledge, resources and networking. Half (6 of 12) of the service providers cited that they had difficulties accessing adequate funding.

#### 4.7.3 Recommendations

A number of recommendations pertaining to funding were identified through the consultations including the following:

1. Increase awareness of funding available for the employment and life skills related programs.
2. Develop more appropriate outcomes criteria for funding programs that offer basic supports.
3. Develop more partnerships between municipal, provincial and federal governments to create long-term and comprehensive plans and coordinated services (avoiding duplication of initiatives and services).
4. Harmonize regulations like the welfare support programs and Employment Insurance, and work toward avoiding duplication of services among the various service providers.
5. Create processes of sustainable funding.
6. Address human resource issues such as retention of program staff.
7. Examine social enterprise structures<sup>5</sup> and consider applying strategies which are successful to current programs and services.

<sup>5</sup> Centre for Community Enterprise. <http://www.cedworks.com/index.html>

#### **4.8 Issue #8: Transportation**

An issue that was commonly identified in the consultations in both 2004 and 2008 was transportation. Transportation difficulties impeded the ability of some youth to get to the job interviews, employment services or programs, as well as to workplaces once employment has been obtained.

A high proportion of jobs in Edmonton related to trades are located on the outskirts of the city. While transportation infrastructure in the core of the city is accessible and reliable, there are limited services to the city boundaries and beyond. Not all youth have access to vehicles at all times. Some youth have “graduated” driver’s licenses that do not allow them to drive at night, for example. Others can not afford a vehicle. Significant barriers were identified in using public transportation, which can make travel to interviews or worksites impossible, inconvenient, expensive or unsafe. This can act as a barrier or disincentive to finding or maintaining employment. Specific barriers related to transportation identified in the consultations include:

Public transportation can be costly, especially for youth who are unemployed and looking for a job. Many youth stated they had difficulty affording the cost of a monthly bus pass, and were not able to get free or subsidized passes.

Public transportation was not available to some locations where jobs are located. The limitations of the public transportation system mean that some worksites were not accessible by bus, either all day or at certain times of the day. Particular areas identified included locations on the edge of the city and in the industrial areas. In some cases, workers would be forced to walk long distances to and from bus stops, which causes safety concerns at night, especially for female workers.

Public transportation does not operate during periods of the day when some workers required transportation. Youth stated that they were often unable to use public transportation at certain times of the day, such as in the morning, after peak hours, or late at night. Workers in the service industry (especially janitorial or serving/bar staff) often begin or finish work before or after scheduled bus hours. Employers and other staff could not always be relied on to provide alternate transportation.

In addition, the sprawling nature of Edmonton often meant that some trips to interviews or workplaces could take long periods of time if bus connections were infrequent. This was felt to be especially true in cases where youth were traveling to other quadrants of the city (such as from the Northwest to Millwoods for example). The size of the city also means that many youth do not want to access services outside of their immediate area, as noted by some of the service providers interviewed. For example, transportation was also noted as a challenge for youth from communities in the outlying areas of Edmonton (such as St. Albert) in terms of getting to and from Edmonton for employment or job search.

#### 4.8.1 Identified Assets

Some service providers are able to provide a limited number of free bus passes to youth. For example, the Strathcona Youth Co-op receives free bus tickets through the Donate-a-Ride program. Donate-A-Ride is a fundraising program designed to provide transit tickets to Edmontonians in need. The project is a partnership of private business, the municipal government, and non-profit organizations. Edmonton Transit, as part of this project, also provides additional tickets. Numerous agencies act as distribution points for the transit tickets that were purchased through the Donate-A-Ride program.

The Universal Transit Pass (U-Pass) has been introduced subsequent to the 2004 report. However, none of the participants interviewed qualified for the program since they were not post-secondary students. The U-Pass was created by the Edmonton Transit System to provide eligible students at Grant MacEwan College and the University of Alberta with unlimited travel on regular ETS as well as St. Albert and Strathcona Transit during the fall and winter terms.

Youth receiving Alberta Works Income Support are sometimes able to access bus passes through their welfare workers. Sherwood Park and St. Albert commuters benefit from a Dial-a-Bus<sup>6</sup> service; a cost-effective, “as needed” transit service that is available when ridership is low and fixed transit routes are not operating.

#### 4.8.2 Identified Gaps, Needs, Priorities

Youth who do not have their own source of transportation face challenges with respect to public transportation routes and schedules. As much of the development and new jobs in Edmonton are not located in the city’s downtown area, there is a need for affordable, convenient, safe and usable transportation to all areas of the city where jobs are located.

#### 4.8.3 Recommendations

Major recommendations that were identified through the consultations included the following:

1. Increase the ease with which youth in need can access free or subsidized public transportation. By appealing for support and donations from the community through programs, such as Donate-A-Ride, bus tickets are available to service providers. Youth-serving agencies could encourage targeted campaigns to address youth transportation issues specifically.
2. Continue to provide discount bus tickets to youth participating in services or programs.
3. Sites/organizations that depend on youth as a large portion of their workforce could provide shuttle services to facilitate transportation to and from jobsites (for example, Industrial Park areas or surrounding communities). This service

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.stalbert.ca/dial-a-bus-service>.

could be offered through the transit system or through employers. A regional “broker” service could be considered to help employers identify common needs with respect to after-hours transportation services for their staff.

4. Expand Dial-a-Bus service which would allow youth to access public transportation outside of the regularly scheduled times or outside of normal bus routes.
5. Explore the benefits to providing subsidized transportation costs with employers who already provide this benefit to employees, particularly youth. Inform other employers of the benefits of providing youth with bus tickets or passes as an employment benefit, such as decreasing absenteeism or lateness, as applicable.

#### **4.9 Issue #9: Affordable Child Care**

Lack of child care service was identified as one of the top five factors that make it difficult for some young adults to obtain, as well as retain a job. Youth also cited it as one of the services they need to achieve their long-term career goals.

##### 4.9.1 Identified Assets

There are numerous childcare facilities such as daycares and day-homes available in the Edmonton area. In addition, there are a number of provincial and federal initiatives designed to help families subsidize daycare expenses.

##### 4.9.2 Identified Gaps, Needs, Priorities

Teen birthrate in low income Edmonton communities is significantly higher than in more affluent communities (City of Edmonton, 2006). Low socio-economic status and associated social exclusions contribute more than any other factor to low quality of life and reduced opportunities for optimal child development. There is strong evidence of the efficacy of high-quality child care and other early childhood programs (Ball, 2008).

Although childcare facilities and subsidies are available, there is an insufficient number of these facilities/or available space for child placement to meet the demands of the general population. Furthermore, these facilities may not be affordable for the many of the parents/youth-at-risk.

##### 4.9.3 Recommendations

1. Affordable child care is a nation-wide problem. Research into innovative and successful approaches in other parts of Alberta, in other provinces and/or in other countries would provide an inventory of best practices. From here, relevant and practical options/approaches could be explored.

## **SECTION 5: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION**

### **5.1 Recommendations for the Edmonton Youth Engagement Committee**

The following recommendations are made for the Edmonton Youth Community Engagement Committee to initiate actions designed to bring about policy and program changes affecting the identified challenges:

#### **Recommendation #1: Awareness of Identified Issues Among Stakeholders**

Ensure awareness of the above-mentioned issues among organizations, businesses and government departments involved in influencing the policies and programming related to the identified challenges experienced by youth in the Edmonton region.

#### **Recommendation #2: Dissemination of Findings Among Stakeholders**

Make the Final Report or a Summary Report for the *Edmonton Region Youth Profile Update 2008* publicly available through the internet or other means—including websites of the Steering Committee—and venues such as the Edmonton Inter-Agency Youth Services Association (EIYSA). The Consultant could also contact participating stakeholders and provide information about where to access the web-posted Final or Summary Report.

#### **Recommendation #3: Action Plan for Addressing the Identified Issues**

Where it is possible for the Edmonton Youth Community Engagement Committee to directly initiate actions on specific issues, the Committee could identify priorities, “next steps”, and strategic goals based on the recommendations provided throughout this report, as well as implement further actions.

Where the Edmonton Youth Community Engagement Committee can not directly initiate actions on specific issues, the Committee could serve as an educator and/or coordinating body among organizations, businesses and government departments involved in influencing the policies and programming related to the identified challenges experienced by youth in the Edmonton region.

### **5.2 Review and Update Evaluation Strategy**

The *Edmonton Region Plan for Coordination of Youth Services (2004-2007)* recommended measuring the degree to which various stakeholders are aware of and utilize programs and services on employment and life skills aimed towards youth/young adults.

The *Edmonton Region Youth Profile Update (2008)* project has found that although there are numerous programs and services on employment and life skills targeted for youth/young adults, the various stakeholders have a limited awareness of programs other than the ones they were utilizing. As shown in the Table 5-2, employers were aware of and had accessed the “typical” employment services which only offered services related to employment, whereas youth-at-risk were more likely to seek services which offered not only employment services but also life skills and support-related services. Interestingly, youth did

not mention any of the programs that employers did and vice versa, perhaps indicating that youth and employers are not crossing paths due to a lack of awareness of the various programs.

The Edmonton Youth Community Engagement Committee could take an action-oriented approach rather than information-oriented approach to the identified issues. The priority should be to increase awareness of the existing programs and to encourage participation among youth and youth-at-risk, service providers / youth-serving agencies, and employers. For example, the Committee could develop a communication strategy for employers and youth to ensure mutual awareness and promotion of the programs and services being offered by the employment agencies.

Recommendation #2: Coordinate Collaboration for Best Practices and Dialogue

The Edmonton Youth Community Engagement Committee could coordinate collaboration between various stakeholders to identify best practices and opportunities for open dialogue.

Table 5-2 indicates which services and programs were mentioned by youth (Y) and by employers (E).

**Table 5-2  
Youth Services Accessed by Youth and Employers**

	Aboriginal Services	Abuse	Addiction and Supports	Basic Needs	Crisis Distress Suicide	Disabilities	Employment Education Life Skills	Family Support Child Care	Financial Assistance	GLTB Support	Health	Legal/ Advocacy	Immigrant/ Newcomers	Prostitution	Recreation/ Fitness	Shelters
AADAC Youth Services			Y													
Accès Emploi							E									
Alberta Employment and Immigration							Y									
Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society	Y						Y									
BGS Youth Ventures							Y									
Bredin Institute for Learning							E									
Boyle Street Community Services			Y	Y			Y	Y			Y	Y			Y	
Canada Summer Jobs							E									
Capital Health											Y					
CASA											Y					
Catholic Social Services				Y			Y	Y					Y	Y		
Crisis Unit Children and Youth Services		Y			Y											
DECSA						Y	Y									
E4C Kids In The Hall							Y									
Edmonton John Howard Society							Y									
Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers													Y			

	Aboriginal Services	Abuse	Addiction and Supports	Basic Needs	Crisis Distress Suicide	Disabilities	Employment Education Life Skills	Family Support Child Care	Financial Assistance	GLTB Support	Health	Legal/ Advocacy	Immigrant/ Newcomers	Prostitution	Recreation/ Fitness	Shelters
Edmonton Native Healing Centre	Y						Y									
i-Human							Y					Y				
McBride Career Group							Y									
Old Strathcona Youth Society							Y					Y			Y	
Oteenow Employment Centre	Y						Y									
Post-Secondary Institutions (NAIT, U of A, Etc.)							E									
Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP)							E									
Service Canada Centres for Youth (Hire-A-Student)							E									
Streetworks											Y	Y				
Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP)							E									
Women Building Futures							Y									
Youth Emergency Shelter Society				Y			Y									Y

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## Appendix B - Directory of Youth Services

The Edmonton Inter-Agency Youth Services Association created a Directory of Youth Services (2008). These services have been listed in Appendix B. Italicized entries are services that were mentioned by the participants; however, these are not part of the Directory of Youth Services.

<b>Name of Organization</b>	<b>Description of Organization</b>
<b>Aboriginal Services</b>	
Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society	Adult Employment Program, Orenda House, Rites of Passage, Wind Dancers Youth Pre-Employment Program
Ben Calf Robe Society	Youth Intervention Program (Amiskos)
Boys and Girls Clubs of Edmonton	Aboriginal Services
Edmonton Native Healing Centre	Striving For Excellence Youth Program
Edmonton Public School	Amiskwacyi Academy
Metis Child and Family Services	
Metis Nation of Alberta Employment Services	
Native Counseling Service	
Oteenow Employment Centre (not at all effective)	
Yellowhead Tribal College	
<b>Abuse</b>	
Crisis Unit Children and Youth Services	
Edmonton Society Against Mind Abuse	
Edmonton Police Service	Child Abuse Hotline, Children At Risk Response Team (CAART)
<b>Addiction and Supports</b>	
AADAC Youth Services	
Alanon	
Alcoholics Anonymous	
Boyle Street Community Services	Youth Outreach and Drop-in Centre
Chimo Youth Retreat Centre	Transitional SIL and Solo
Narcotics Anonymous	
<b>Basic Needs</b>	
Alberta Employment and Immigration	Income Support Contact Centre
Bissell Centre	
Boyle Street Community Services	Youth Outreach and Drop-in Centre
Boys and Girls Clubs of Edmonton	Supported Independent Living Program (Turning Point)
Capital Region Housing Corporation	
Catholic Social Services	
Chimo Youth Retreat Centre	Transitional SIL and Solo
Dickinsfield Amity House	
E4C	Crossroads, WEAC
Easter Seal Ability Council	
Edmonton's Food Bank	
Hope Mission	Hope Mission Youth Shelter (Shift Program and Emergency Mat Program)
Inner City Youth Housing Project	
The Mustard Seed	
Native Counseling Services of Alberta	Cunningham Place
Edmonton Women's Shelter (WIN House)	
Youth Emergency Shelter Society	
The Support Network	2-1-1 Community Service Information
<b>Crisis/Distress/Suicide</b>	
City of Edmonton	Assessment and Short Term Counseling
Crisis Unit Children and Youth Services	
Edmonton Police Service	Child Abuse Hotline, Children At Risk Response Team (CAART)
Protection of Sexually Exploited Children (PSEC), Children's Services Authority	
Teen Support Line (Salvation Army)	
The Support Network	Distress Line, Walk In Counseling
Edmonton Women's Shelter (WIN House)	
<b>Disabilities</b>	
Canadian National Institute for the Blind	Children and Family Services, Ambassador's Club Youth Leadership Program, Young Stars Summer Program
Chrysalis	Vocational Services

Connect Society of Edmonton	Deaf Youth Outreach Program
Easter Seal Ability Council	
Gateway Association for Community Living	Youth Engaged in Action
On-Site Placement Service Association	Opportunities for Youth
<i>Distinct Employabilities Counseling Services of Alberta (DECSA)</i>	<i>Employment Support for People with Disabilities</i>
<b>Employment/Education/Life Skills</b>	
<i>Accès Emploi</i>	
Alberta Employment and Immigration ( <i>Alberta Works, LMIC</i> )	Income Support Contact Centre
Ben Calf Robe Society	Youth Intervention Program (Amiskos)
Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society	Adult Employment Program, Rites of Passage, Wind Dancers Youth Pre-Employment Program
Boyle Street Community Services	Youth Outreach and Drop-in Centre
BGS Youth Ventures	
Boyle Street Education Centre	
Boys and Girls Clubs of Edmonton	Supported Independent Living Program (Turning Point)
Bredin Institute for Learning	Youth Connections
<i>Canada Summer Jobs</i>	
Catholic Social Services	The MacDaniel Youth Program
Chimo Youth Retreat Centre	Transitional SIL and Solo
Chrysalis	Vocational Services
<i>Distinct Employabilities Counseling Services of Alberta (DECSA)</i>	<i>Employment Support for People with Disabilities</i>
E4C	Kids in the Hall
Edmonton Catholic School Board	Guardian Angel Program, Fresh Start Outreach High School, Partners for Youth
Edmonton Community Services	City of Edmonton Youth Services, City of Edmonton Youth Council
Edmonton John Howard Society	Adult Transition Learning Program, Avenues to Employment, Intake and Employment Program, REE Start
Edmonton Native Healing Centre (Striving for Excellence)	Life Skills, Education Support, Traditional Knowledge, Leadership, Relationship Building
Edmonton Public Schools	Amiskwaciy Academy, Centre High Campus, Learning Stores, Transition Support Program, Transitions at the Y
I Human	
Inner City High School	
The Learning Centre Literacy Association	
<i>McBride Career Group</i>	
Metis Employment Services	
Native Counseling Services of Alberta	Gang Intervention and Diversion Program, Inner City Youth Support Program
NorQuest College	
Old Strathcona Youth Society	
Oteenow Employment Centre	
PALS (Project Adult Literacy)	ESL, Literacy Program, Math Literacy
<i>Post-secondary Initiatives (NAIT, University of Alberta, Grant MacEwan, Career and Placement Services)</i>	
<i>Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) /Careers Next Generation</i>	
<i>Service Canada Centres for Youth</i>	Formerly Known as Hire A Student
<i>Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP)</i>	
<i>Temporary Employment Agencies</i>	
Terra – Centre for Pregnant and Parenting Teens	
Women Building Futures	
Yellowhead Tribal College	
YMCA	Youth Transition Program
YouCan	Peacebuilders, Verto Program
Youth Emergency Shelter Society	
YRAP – Youth Restorative Project	
<b>Family Support/Child Care</b>	
Alberta Employment and Immigration	Income Support Contact Centre
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Edmonton	
Bissell Centre	
Boyle Street Community Services	

Catholic Social Services	Family Teen Mediation Program
The Family Centre	
Kid's Cottage	Crisis Nursery
Metis Child and Family Services Society	
Millwoods Family Resource Centre	
Multicultural Health Brokers Co-Op Ltd.	
Uncles and Aunts at Large Society	Individual and Group Mentoring and Parent Support
The Support Network	Youth One
<b>Financial Assistance</b>	
Alberta Employment and Immigration	Income Support Contact Centre
<b>Gay/Lesbian/Transgender/Bisexual Support</b>	
Pride Centre of Edmonton	
<b>Health</b>	
Bissell Centre	
Boyle Street Community Services	Youth Outreach and Drop-in Centre
Capital Health	The Birth Control Centre, Abbotsfield Outreach Clinic, Capital Health Link, Psychiatric Treatment Clinic
CASA	
Department of Dentistry (U of A)	
Edmonton Community Services	Assessment and Short Term Counseling
Edmonton Society Against Mind Abuse	
The Family Centre	
Find a Family Doctor	
HIV Network of Edmonton Society	Triple Threat
Jewish Family Services	
Kids Help Line	
Multicultural Health Brokers Co-Op Ltd.	
Options Sexual Health Association (formerly Planned Parenthood)	
Regional Mental Health	
Sexually Transmitted Disease Centre	
Shine Clinic	
Streetworks	
<b>Legal/Advocacy</b>	
Boyle Street Community Services	Youth Outreach and Drop-in Centre
Dickinsfield Amity House	
Edmonton Police Services	Victims' Services Unit
Edmonton Community Services	City of Edmonton Youth Council
Elizabeth Fry Society of Edmonton	Court Assistance for Female Youth (CAFFY)
I Human	
Kids Help Line	
Landlord and Tenant Advisory Board	
Office of Child and Youth Advocate	
Old Strathcona Youth Society	
Streetworks	
Student Legal Services of Edmonton	
Youth Criminal Defense Office	
YRAP – Youth Restorative Action Project	
<b>Immigrant/Newcomers</b>	
Alberta Employment and Immigration	Income Support Contact Centre
Catholic Social Services	Youth Program – Immigration and Settlement Services
Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers	
Multicultural Health Brokers Co-Op Ltd.	
<b>Missing Children/Youth</b>	
Edmonton Police Service	Child Abuse Hotline, Child At Risk Response Team (CAART)
Operation Go Home	
<b>Prostitution</b>	
E4C	Crossroads
Catholic Social Services	Safehouse
Edmonton Police Service	Project KARE
Protection of Sexually Exploited Children (PSEC), Children's Services Authority	
<b>Recreation/Fitness</b>	
Ben Calf Robe Society	Youth Intervention Program (Amiskos)
Bissell Centre	

Boyle Street Community Services	Youth Outreach and Drop-in Centre
Boys and Girls Clubs of Edmonton	
E4C	Northeast Teen Drop-in Centre
Easter Seal Ability Council	
Edmonton Community Services	Leisure Access Program
The Family Centre	
Old Strathcona Youth Society	
<b>Shelters</b>	
Alberta Employment and Immigration	Income Support Contact Centre
E4C	WEAC
Hope Mission Youth Shelter	Shift Program, Emergency Matt Program
Inner City Youth Housing Project	
WIN House	
Youth Emergency Shelter Society (YESS)	

## **APPENDIX C – Youth Interview Guide**

## ***Edmonton Region Youth Profile Update 2008***

### **Youth Interview Guide**

<b>Name:</b>
<b>Date and Time:</b>
<b>Phone:</b>
<b>Address (if in-person interview):</b>

The purpose of this interview is to gather opinions and insights from young adults about services and issues related to finding and preparing for jobs. This interview is part of a larger research study, the *Edmonton Region Youth Profile Update 2008*, being undertaken for the City of Edmonton. Information collected in the study will help to advise government on issues related to youth employment, job services and other resources.

Your participation in this interview is voluntary and the information you provide will be treated with the strictest confidence. Anything you say will remain confidential—that is, your name will not be associated with anything you say.

When we talk about youth and young adults in this interview, I would like you to consider those persons aged 15 to 30 in Edmonton and the surrounding areas, including Leduc, Sherwood Park, Spruce Grove and St. Albert.

**Section A: Barriers and Challenges to Employment**

A1. How do you feel youth and young adults are viewed by employers in this community?

A2. How easy do you think it is for you and your friends to get a job?

- Very easy     
  Somewhat easy     
  Somewhat Difficult     
  Very difficult     
  Don't Know

A3a. What are some of the things that make it *easy* for yourself and/or other youth and young adults to get jobs?

A3b. What are some of the things that make it difficult for yourself and/or other youth and young adults to get jobs? (e.g. personal issues, lifestyle issues, family problems, problems with your community or city, or anything else)

- *Which do you think is the biggest challenge?*

A4. How easy do you think it is for you and your friends to keep a job once you have it?

- Very easy     
  Somewhat easy     
  Somewhat Difficult     
  Very difficult     
  Don't Know

A4a. What are some of the things that make it easy for yourself and/or other youth and young adults to keep a job?

A4b. What are some of the things that make it difficult for yourself and/or other youth and young adults to keep a job? (e.g. personal issues, lifestyle issues, family problems, problems with your community or city, or anything else)

- *Which do you think is the biggest challenge?*

A5a. In your opinion, what are some of the ways that youth and young adults are not ready for having a job or a career (e.g. when looking for work, holding down a job or career)?

A5b. What would help them be better prepared?

A6. Do you ever think about your long term career goals or what you will be doing in the future?

Why or why not?

- *If no, skip to A7a.*

A6a. What sorts of things do you think would help you to achieve your long-term career goals?

A7a. As employees, what benefits do you think youth/young adults bring to a company?

A7b. As employees, what disadvantages do you think youth/young adults bring to a company?

A8. What are the five (5) skills youth and young adults need to learn to prepare them to succeed in the workforce (to find and keep a job)?

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reading text   | <input type="checkbox"/> Document Use                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Writing  | <input type="checkbox"/> Numeracy (Math)                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Oral communications  | <input type="checkbox"/> Problem solving skills                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Working with others  | <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge of the business             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Continuous learning  | <input type="checkbox"/> Use of equipment                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Thinking skills  | <input type="checkbox"/> Behaving appropriately                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Maintaining personal standards                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Planning and time management          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Working in teams   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other ( <i>please specify</i> ) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge and use of information technology (i.e. computers) | _____  |

**Section B: Working with Employers**

B1. How receptive do you think employers in your community or city are to hiring youth/young adults?

- |   |   |   |   |                                     |
|---|---|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very receptive | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat receptive | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat unreceptive | <input type="checkbox"/> Very unreceptive | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know |
|---|---|---|---|-------------------------------------|

B2. As a youth or young adult employee, have you had any problems working with employers in the area? If so, what kind of problems?

B3. How can employers and/or jobs be changed to be more youth/young adult-friendly?

B4. What role do you think employers could take in preparing new youth and young adult employees for their jobs?

B5. What do you think is the most effective way for youth/young adults to make contact with employers?

**Section C: Available Resources or Assets**

C1. What is available in your community to help youth and young adults overcome the difficulties they face when looking for or trying to keep a job (e.g. counseling services, employment office)?

C2. In your opinion, what are the benefits of living in the Edmonton area when looking for a job? (e.g. job services, lots of jobs available, etc.)

**Section D: Gaps in Services and Resources**

D1. Are you aware of any job/employment services in the area, which work well for youth/young adults? If yes, why do these work better than others?

D2a. Have you ever used any job or employment services in your community or city?

- Yes (*go to question D2b*)
- No (*go to question D2c*)
- Don't Know (*go to question D2c*)

D2b. If yes, please list the service/program you used and check the box which describes how effective were they in assisting you to find employment?

	Very Effective	Somewhat Effective	Not Very Effective	Not at all Effective	Don't Know
1.					
2.					
3.					

D2c. If NO or DON'T KNOW, please explain the main reasons you have not used these services to help you in finding a job.

D3a. Have you ever tried to use any job or employment services and were told that you did not qualify? If so, what service was it and what were the reason(s) you did not qualify?

D3b. Have you had any other difficulties trying to access youth and young adult employment services? If so, what difficulties did you encounter?

D4. Do you feel that youth and young adults have employment needs that are not being met by your community? If so, what are these needs and what do you think can or should be done to address them?

D5. Do you feel that youth and young adults have other needs that are not being met by the community? If so, what are these needs and what do you think can or should be done to address these needs?

**Section E: Best Practices**

E1. What works best to help prepare and get youth and young adults into jobs? Why do these things work better than others?

E2. Have you been able to use the things you've learned in school about careers and employment in the real world? Please explain?

E3a. Imagine you were looking for information regarding preparing for a job or finding/keeping a job. What kind of help would you want?

E3b. Who would you want to give you that help?

E4. What are the best ways to inform youth and young adults about employment or job services?

**Section F: Final Comments**

F1. Do you have any other comments or suggestions that you would like to make regarding any of the topics we discussed during the interview?

F2. Would you be interested in attending a presentation on the findings of this project?

Yes

No

**Section G: Client Profile**

G1. Which age group do you belong to?

15-19

20-24

25-29

30

No Response

G2. Are you currently employed? *If NO, go to question G4.*

Yes

No

G3. If are you currently employed, are you employed

Full-time

Part-time

Seasonally

On-call basis

Other

G4. Are you a member of a visible minority?

Yes

No

G5. Are you First Nations, Métis, Inuit or Aboriginal?

Yes

No

G6. Do you feel that your ethnic or racial background might add “barriers” to getting a job, keeping a job, or acquiring the skills and experience that might help you acquire and retain a job?

Yes       No      What kind of barriers do you face?

G7. Do you consider yourself to be a person with a disability; that is, are you someone with a long-term physical or mental challenge that limits the kind or amount of paid work that you can do?

Yes       No

G8. Do you feel that being a member of this group might add “barriers” to getting a job, keeping a job, or acquiring the skills and experience that might help you acquire and retain a job?

Yes       No      What kinds of barriers do you face?

G9. Do you feel that your gender may add “barriers” to getting a job, keeping a job, or acquiring the skills and experience that might help you acquire and retain a job?

Yes       No      What kind of barriers do you face?

G10. Do you feel that your religious beliefs or values may add “barriers” to getting a job, keeping a job, or acquiring the skills and experience that might help you acquire and retain a job?

Yes       No      What kind of barriers do you face?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

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Edmonton, AB T5J 0B3

(Toll-free phone) 1-877-665-6252  
(Toll-free fax) 1-866-448-9047

## **APPENDIX D – Employer Interview Guide**

## ***Edmonton Region Youth Profile Update 2008***

### **Employer Interview Guide**

<b>Name:</b>	
<b>Name of Business:</b>	<b>Type of Business:</b>
<b>Date and Time:</b>	
<b>Phone:</b>	
<b>Address (if in-person interview):</b>	

The purpose of this interview is to gather opinions and insights from members of the Edmonton and area employer and business community about services and issues related to youth employment. This interview is part of a larger research study, the *Edmonton Region Youth Profile Update 2008*, being undertaken for the City of Edmonton. Information collected in the study will help to advise government on issues related to youth employment, job services and other resources.


Your participation in this interview is voluntary and the information you provide will be treated with the strictest confidence. Anything you say will remain confidential—that is, your name will not be associated with anything you say.


When we talk about youth and young adults in this interview, I would like you to consider those persons aged 15 to 30 in Edmonton and the surrounding areas, including Leduc, Sherwood Park, Spruce Grove and St. Albert.

**Section A: Client Profile**

A1. Approximately how many employees are in your company? \_\_\_\_\_

A2a. Do you currently employ any youth and/or young adults (i.e. anyone between the ages of 15 and 30)?

Yes  What % of your workforce is between 15 and 30? \_\_\_\_\_%  
 How many youth and/or young adults have you hired in the last 5 years? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Are youth and young adult employees concentrated in a particular part of your company?  
 Yes Which part? \_\_\_\_\_  
 No

No  Please explain why.  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Don't Know

A2b. In your opinion, have the youth and/or young adults you hired changed over the past few years with respect to their background (i.e. are you hiring more "non-mainstream" youth or youth with identifiable "barriers")? If yes, can you explain?

A3a. What would you consider to be the top three advantages of hiring a youth/young adult for your company?


- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

A3b. What would you consider to be top three disadvantages of hiring youth/young adult for your company?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### Section B: Hiring Practices

B1. Do you have a training program specifically for new youth and young adult employees?

Yes  Please describe your program

---

---

---

No

Don't Know

B2. What role/responsibility could employers take in preparing new employees for their jobs?

B3. What do you think are the top three most effective ways for youth and young adults to make contact with you for employment?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**Section C: Job Skills and Retention**

C1. In your opinion, what are the top five employability skills youth and young adults need to learn in order to prepare them to succeed in the workforce (to find and keep a job)?

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reading text   | <input type="checkbox"/> Document Use                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Writing  | <input type="checkbox"/> Numeracy (Math)                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Oral communications  | <input type="checkbox"/> Problem solving skills                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Working with others  | <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge of the business             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Continuous learning  | <input type="checkbox"/> Use of equipment                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Thinking skills  | <input type="checkbox"/> Behaving appropriately                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Maintaining personal standards                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Planning and time management          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Working in teams   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other ( <i>please specify</i> ) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge and use of information technology (i.e. computers) | _____  |

C2. Is the skill level of youth/young adult employees different as compared to 5 years ago? (i.e. higher or lower skill levels). If yes, can you describe how skill levels have changed?

C3. Are the expectations of youth/young adults regarding employment different as compared to 5 years ago? If yes, can you describe how those expectations have changed?

C4. Are youth entering positions with a clear understanding of what it takes to build a long-term career? (e.g. understanding of salary progression, mobility, roles, etc). If not, can you describe what sorts of things youth don't understand?

C5. In your opinion, how can youth be better prepared for the workforce?

C6a. Is retention of youth/young adult employees an issue for you?

- Yes (*go to C6b*)
- No (*got to C7*)

C6b. What have been the most common reasons why youth and young adult employees have left your organization?

C7. What kinds of things (i.e., job skills, attitudes, commitment, loyalty to company, etc) contribute to youth/young adults retaining their job?

C8. What role do you think employers could play in increasing the retention of youth/young adult employees?

#### **Section D: Challenges and Resources**

D1. What do you think are the top three challenges/barriers to *hiring* youth and young adults for your company, if any? Which do you think is the biggest challenge?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

D2a. What do you think are the top three barriers youth/ young adults face when finding employment in your community or city? Which do you think is the biggest challenge?

1.  
2.  
3.

---

D2b. What do you think are the top three barriers youth/ young adults face when maintaining employment in your community or city? Which do you think is the biggest challenge?

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D3. What do you think are the Edmonton area's strengths in terms of helping or facilitating young people to get a job? (e.g. services, resources, local economic conditions, etc.)

---

D4a. Are you aware of any existing programs/services in your community or city to help employers to hire youth and young adults?

Yes (go to question D4b)  
 No (go to question D5a)  
 Don't Know (go to question D5a)

D4b. If so, what programs/services are you aware of?

---

D4c. What would be the best way to let employers become aware of the existence of these programs?

---

D5a. Have you ever used any job or employment services or programs to hire youth and young adults?

Yes (go to D5b)  
 No (go to D5c)  
 Don't Know (go to D5c)

D5b. If YES, please list the service/program you used and check the box which describes how effective were they in assisting you to hire suitable youth/young adult employees?

	Very Effective	Somewhat Effective	Not Very Effective	Not at all Effective	Don't Know
1.					
2.					
3.					

D5c. If NO or DON'T KNOW, what are the main reasons you have not inquired or sought out these services to assist you in hiring youth and young adults.

### Section E: Gaps in Services and Resources

E1. What would encourage or help your company to hire more youth/young adults?

E2. What resources/services/types of help are not found in your community or city that you think would be useful for yourself and/or other employers looking to hire more youth and young adults?

### Section F: Other Comments

F1. Do you have any other comments or suggestions that you would like to make regarding any of the topics we discussed during the interview?

F2. Would you be interested in attending a presentation on the findings of this project?

Yes

No

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

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## **APPENDIX E – Service Providers & Youth-serving Agencies Interview Guide**

## **Edmonton Region Youth Profile Update 2008**

### **Service Provider Interview Guide**

<b>Name:</b>	
<b>Name of Business:</b>	<b>Type of Business:</b>
<b>Date and Time:</b>	
<b>Phone:</b>	
<b>Address (if in-person interview):</b>	

The purpose of this interview is to gather opinions and insights from members of the Edmonton and area youth and young adult service provider community about services and issues related to youth employment. This interview is part of a larger research study, the *Edmonton Region Youth Profile Update 2008*, being undertaken for the City of Edmonton. Information collected in the study will help to advise government on issues related to youth employment, job services and other resources.

Your participation in this interview is voluntary and the information you provide will be treated with the strictest confidence. Anything you say will remain confidential—that is, your name will not be associated with anything you say.

When we talk about youth and young adults in this interview, I would like you to consider those persons aged 15 to 30 in Edmonton and the surrounding areas, including Leduc, Sherwood Park, Spruce Grove and St. Albert.

**Section A: Service Provider Information**

A1. Please describe your role as a service provider to youth and young adult employment and/or youth and young adult programs in the Edmonton Region.

A2. Are there positive factors that impact service delivery of youth/young adult employment programs in your community or city?

A3. Are there negative factors that impact service delivery of youth/young adult employment programs in your community or city?

**Section B: Barriers to Employment**

B1. In your opinion, what are some of the things that make it difficult for youth and young adults to get jobs in the Edmonton Area? Which do you think is the biggest challenge?

B2. What do you think are the top challenges/barriers employers encounter when hiring youth/young adults? (i.e. transportation, childcare) Which do you think is the biggest challenge?

**Section C Job Skills and Retention**

C1. Are youth and young adults prepared to enter the workforce? If not, how can they be better prepared?

C2. Are youth and young adults entering positions with long-term career potential (e.g. salary progression, upward mobility)?

C3. In your opinion, what are the top five employability skills youth and young adults need to learn in order to prepare them to succeed in the workforce (to find and keep a job)?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reading text   | <input type="checkbox"/> Document Use                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Writing  | <input type="checkbox"/> Numeracy (Math)              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Oral communications  | <input type="checkbox"/> Problem solving skills       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Working with others  | <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge of the business    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Continuous learning  | <input type="checkbox"/> Use of equipment             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Thinking skills  | <input type="checkbox"/> Behaving appropriately       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Maintaining personal standards (appearance and grooming)     | <input type="checkbox"/> Planning and time management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Working in teams   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge and use of information technology (i.e. computers) | _____   |

C4. As employees, what benefits do you think youth/young adults bring to a company?

C5. As employees, what disadvantages do you think youth/young adults bring to a company?

C6. Are the expectations of youth/young adults regarding employment different as compared to 5 years ago?

C7. Is youth/young adult job retention/maintenance more or less of an issue than 5 years ago?

#### Section D: Employers

D1. Have you provided any job or employment services to employers with respect to hiring youth and young adults?

- Yes (*please answer questions D2 and D3*)
- No (*please go to question D5*)

D2. If yes, what kinds of services have you provided?

D3. Have you recently experienced a greater or lesser demand for services from employers as compared to 5 years ago? If yes, for any specific services or topics?

D4. What were some of the challenges you faced with respect to providing the employment service and working with the employer and the youth/young adult?

D5. In your opinion, do local employers need to be better prepared to hire/retain and work with youth/young adults? If so, what areas need to be addressed?

D6. What role/responsibility could employers take in preparing new youth and young adult employees for their jobs/for job retention? (e.g. orientation, training, etc.)

D7. What skills do youth/young adults need in order to increase job retention?

### Section E: Best Practices

E1. Based on your experience, what types of resources/services are most effective in helping youth and young adults find sustainable employment?

E2. What do you think are the Edmonton and area's strengths in terms of helping or facilitating youth and young adults to get a job? (e.g. youth employment services, resources, local economic conditions, etc.)

E3. What strategies can be best employed to inform youth and young adults about these strengths and/or resources? (i.e. forms of advertising, outreach, etc.)

E4a. Are you aware of any groups of youth/young adults that are hard to reach by existing programs? Please explain.

E4b. In your opinion, what strategies could be used to reach these marginalized groups or hard to reach youth/young adults?

#### **Section F: Gaps in Service and Resources**

F1. Based on your experience, are there any existing gaps in current resources and services that would be useful in helping youth gain sustainable employment?

F2. What current needs/priorities need to be addressed in future programming?

F3. Do you foresee any changes in the labour market in the long term that will require new service development?

#### **Section G: Funding and Coordination**

G1. What are the strengths or positives about current systems of accessing funding for youth/young adult employment programs or services in the Edmonton area? Please explain.

G2. As a service provider, have you encountered barriers or difficulties accessing funding for youth and young adult employment programs or services in the Edmonton area? Please explain.

G3. In your opinion, how can the federal, provincial and/or municipal governments work together to coordinate employment services for youth and young adults?

**Section H: Final Comments**

H1. Do you have any other comments or suggestions that you would like to make regarding any of the topics we discussed during the interview?

H2. Would you be interested in attending a presentation on the findings of this project?

Yes

No

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

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## **APPENDIX F – Philanthropists Interview Guide**

## Edmonton Region Youth Profile Update 2008

### Funder Interview Guide

<b>Name:</b>
<b>Organization/Department</b>
<b>Date and Time:</b>
<b>Phone:</b>
<b>Address:</b>

The purpose of this interview is to gather opinions and insights from members of the Edmonton and area employer and business community about services and issues related to youth employment. This interview is part of a larger research study, the *Edmonton Region Youth Profile Update 2008*, being undertaken for the City of Edmonton. Information collected in the study will help to advise government on issues related to youth employment, job services and other resources.

Your participation in this interview is voluntary and the information you provide will be treated with the strictest confidence. Anything you say will remain confidential—that is, your name will not be associated with anything you say.

When we talk about youth and young adults in this interview, I would like you to consider youth and young adults aged 15 to 30 in Edmonton and the surrounding areas, including Leduc, Sherwood Park, Spruce Grove and St. Albert.

1. Please give a brief description of the organization you represent.

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2. What types of organizations are eligible to apply for funding from your department or organization?

- *Probe: Do you have criteria outlining who is eligible to receive funding?*

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3. Are there types of organizations that you would not provide funding to?

- *Probe: Who are they? Why are they ineligible?*

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4. Have you encountered challenges with finding funding?

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5. How do you determine how much funding an organization is eligible to receive?

- *Probe: Is it dependent on the organization applying? Is it a predetermined amount?*

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6. What are agencies or organizations able to allocate their funding towards?

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7. What, if anything, are agencies or organizations not able to allocate their funding towards?

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8. How long do organizations typically receive funding for (i.e. 1, 3-5 years)?

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9. Are there limitations on the number of times an organization can receive funding? If so, what are the limits?

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10. Do you require any type of reporting from the organizations that receive funding from you? If so, what do you require?

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11. Are there any additional requirements or stipulations an applicant must agree to in order to receive funding? If so, what are they?

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12. Does your organization have any parameters and/or restrictions in instances where an organization you fund has additional funders?

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13. Can you identify any gaps in service?

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14. Is there competition among service providers for funds?

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THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

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