



# Canada Service Corps: Qualitative Research with Youth and Youth- serving Organizations

## Final Report

**Prepared for Employment and Social Development Canada**

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## **Canada Service Corps: Qualitative Research with Youth and Youth-serving Organizations**

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February 2025

This public opinion research report presents the results of qualitative research conducted with youth and youth-serving organizations for the Canada Service Corps (CSC) program. The fieldwork was conducted between October 2024 and February 2025.

It is available upon request in multiple formats (large print, MP3, braille, audio CD, e-text CD, DAISY or accessible PDF), by contacting 1 800 O-Canada (1-800-622-6232). By teletypewriter (TTY), call 1-800-926-9105.

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## Executive Summary

The Learning Branch of Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) commissioned Phoenix Strategic Perspectives (Phoenix SPI) to conduct qualitative research with youth and youth-serving organizations for the Canada Service Corps (CSC) program. The CSC is a national youth service program within ESDC that provides contribution funding to third parties to create volunteer service placements for young Canadians across Canada, with a specific focus on youth from underserved demographics. Phoenix SPI is pleased to present this report to ESDC.

### Research Purpose and Objectives

The CSC is launching a new initiative that complements its existing Grants and Contributions programming. This initiative will provide programming directly to youth, helping them overcome barriers to participation while strengthening their connection to the CSC community. It will also offer opportunities for program alumni to stay engaged in civic activities.

Since delivering programs directly to youth falls outside of the existing Grants and Contributions structure, the first year of the initiative (2024-2025) has focused on consultation and preparation. This public opinion research (POR) study was conducted to understand existing gaps in supporting youth civic engagement and to improve the quality of programming. The main objective of this study was to identify the types of support that would help more young people get involved in volunteer service.

### Methodology

To meet the objectives, 20 online focus groups were held with under-served youth aged 12 to 30 and seven online interviews were conducted with representatives of youth-serving organizations across the country. Of the 20 youth focus groups, four groups and two online interviews included current and former participants of the CSC program who received a micro-grant, while the remaining 16 groups involved youth who had never participated in the CSC program. All youth groups were divided by age: 12–14-year-olds, 15–19-year-olds, 20–24-year-olds, and 25–30-year-olds. Youth participants were recruited from across the country, and the groups for non-CSC participants were further segmented by region: Atlantic Canada, Quebec (French), Ontario and the West (including the Territories). Additionally, seven online interviews were conducted with representatives from youth-serving organizations that have not received CSC funding. All interviews were in English. The fieldwork for the study took place between October 29, 2024, and February 24, 2025.

### Key Findings

*Youth take part in volunteer activities for many different reasons and are interested in various types of volunteer experiences, but their availability for volunteering is often limited by other commitments.*

Youth who have volunteered shared various reasons for choosing their opportunities. Many considered time availability, ensuring that the activities fit their schedules. Education and career-related factors also played a role, with some seeking experience in their field of study or exploring potential career paths. Others chose opportunities connected to their personal interests. A strong desire to make a difference motivated many, as did connections through school, faith, family, or

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friends. Some volunteered to fulfill a mandatory community service requirement, while others did so because of a personal connection to a cause.

Youth identified numerous kinds of volunteer opportunities of interest to them. Among these, the following were mentioned frequently: opportunities to make a difference by helping address a need, support of causes that align with their personal values, community-focused opportunities that emphasize giving back to the community, education and career-related opportunities, experiences related to personal interests, and causes that resonate because of personal experience or connection, such as growing up in a single income family or missing out on extra-curricular activities as a child.

Youth were asked how many hours each week or month would be reasonable for them to commit to volunteering. Weekly commitments ranged from 1-2 hours per week to approximately 10 hours per week, but usually did not exceed 5 hours per week. Monthly commitments ranged from 3-4 hours per month to 15-20 hours per month, but usually did not exceed 10 hours per month. The most common reason for limited availability for volunteering was other commitments, such as school, work, family, friends, and recreational activities. Additional reasons included transportation and the time it takes to travel to and from volunteer opportunities.

***Most found it easy to find information and resources about volunteer opportunities. Youth identified social media, personal networks, and school, among others, as potential sources of information about volunteer opportunities.***

Youth who participated in a CSC-sponsored opportunity were asked how easy or difficult it was to find information and resources about volunteer opportunities. In response, most said it was easy or relatively easy to find information and resources. Reasons why they found it easy included a prior connection to a network or people involved in volunteer opportunities, living in an urban center where many opportunities are available, and the numerous opportunities advertised online and through social media. Participants who described it as difficult pointed to factors such as not knowing where to start looking, having to spend a lot of time online looking for such opportunities, and living in small or rural communities with limited opportunities for volunteering.

Youth frequently identified the following as potential sources of information about volunteer opportunities: social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, LinkedIn, and WhatsApp; personal networks and word of mouth; schools and educational institutions; Google; community-based sources, such as youth centers, community centers, and newspapers; and job fairs. Youth who participated in a CSC-sponsored opportunity discovered their volunteer opportunity through word of mouth (friends, family members, teachers, and faith groups), social media (Instagram, Facebook), newsletters, and previous volunteering. None of these youth learned about their opportunity directly through the CSC program.

***Barriers to starting a volunteer opportunity are most often related to transportation and other commitments. Youth thought they might face many potential challenges or barriers when volunteering with an organization. Barriers notwithstanding, youth identified numerous perceived benefits and skills associated with volunteering.***

Youth identified a range of potential barriers to starting a volunteer opportunity, with transportation and other commitments being the most common. Transportation-related challenges included the time and cost of commuting. Other commitments, such as school, work, and family responsibilities,

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often left little time for volunteering. Financial considerations were also a factor for some, such as the need to prioritize earning an income to cover expenses.

They also identified several challenges or barriers they could face in a volunteer opportunity, with some reporting firsthand experiences of these difficulties. Issues related to the sponsoring organization were a common concern, such as lack of training and unreasonable or unclear expectations. Suitability was another factor, including the opportunity not meeting their expectations or the requirements being too demanding. Others mentioned conflicts between volunteering and other commitments, such as school, work, or extracurricular activities, health-related issues or disabilities, social anxiety, or safety concerns, such as volunteering in unsafe areas, particularly at night.

Potential skills and benefits associated with volunteering included communication skills, networking, making new friends, teamwork skills, social skills (such as empathy and relatability), and increased self-confidence. Youth who participated in CSC volunteer service opportunities were nearly unanimous that their overall experience in these opportunities was positive. Contributing factors included increased self-confidence, skill development, mentorship and support, connecting with like-minded people and networking, resume-building, and reimbursement for some expenses (e.g., food, transit).

*Awareness of the CSC program among youth is limited. However, youth who shared their impressions generally viewed the program positively.*

Only a few participants who had volunteered through a CSC opportunity were aware of the Canada Service Corps, either before or after their service experience. No one was aware of the supports and resources available to youth through the CSC program. Awareness of CSC was also limited among other youth (i.e., non-CSC program participants). Only a few youth thought they had heard of the CSC prior to this research. This included seeing a reference to it on Instagram and hearing the program name through word of mouth.

Due to limited knowledge of CSC, many who took part in CSC volunteer service opportunities felt unable to give an overall impression of the program. Among those who did, overall impressions were positive and based on the following: the program offers youth volunteering opportunities; empowers youth by providing funding opportunities; supports small-scale projects; helps develop skills and project management experience; and fosters community engagement with a genuine commitment to local initiatives. Participants in CSC volunteer service opportunities who had other volunteer experiences generally viewed the CSC program favourably compared to their other experiences.

*Most youth who participated in volunteer activities felt prepared. When learning new things, youth expressed a preference for having multiple learning methods available to them and they use many different types of digital tools for school and work.*

Most youth who had participated in volunteer activities felt prepared before they started their opportunity. Non-CSC program youth who felt unprepared for their volunteer opportunity pointed to lack of information and communication about the role, responsibilities or requirements, the requirements of the opportunity not corresponding to their expectations, and the absence of any training or orientation. Participants in CSC-sponsored volunteer service opportunities who said they

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did not feel prepared tended to link their lack of preparation to the micro-grant component of their opportunity.

Some research participants who took part in a CSC-sponsored volunteer service opportunity said they participated in a training or orientation session before starting their placement. Training topics included budgeting, project management, reporting requirements, recruiting volunteers, raising awareness of a project, overviews of the sponsoring organization, and getting to know the staff members, such as team building activities. Areas in which training or orientation would have been helpful included resume building, communications skills, and strategies for sustaining the project beyond the initial volunteer service opportunity.

Youth were asked specifically if they prefer to learn new things online, in-person, through short videos, through interactive tutorials, or through written guides. In response, participants often said they like to learn new things in more than one way, with in-person learning most often included among their preferences, and learning through written guides included least often. Additionally, participants collectively identified numerous types of digital tools that they use for school and work, including Microsoft 365 applications, graphic design tools, collaboration platforms, educational software and learning platforms, organizational tools, file transfer software, cloud storage tools, and generative artificial intelligence.

***Awareness of the CSC program is also limited among youth-serving organizations, but organizations are interested in working with the program.***

Most interviewees could offer no impression of the CSC because they knew nothing about it or had only heard the name CSC prior to being contacted for the research. After being presented with a description of CSC, representatives of youth-serving organizations expressed interest in learning more about the program and potentially partnering with it to offer volunteer opportunities for youth.

***Organizations use a variety of channels to generate interest in their youth programming, many of which were identified by youth as potential sources of information about volunteer opportunities. Recruitment challenges experienced by these organizations mirror the barriers experienced by youth.***

A variety of channels were considered effective in generating interest in programming to promote civic engagement or volunteering—specifically: social media, word of mouth, schools (including universities), organizations' websites, and community newsletters. Many of these channels are, or would be, used by youth when searching for volunteer opportunities.

The types of issues these organizations encounter when recruiting youth participants for their programs include access to transportation, incidental costs for things like transportation, availability of youth and scheduling issues, making opportunities meaningful to youth, and issues arising from the youth's lack of experience in volunteering (e.g., time management, working in a group setting, and problem-solving).

***Organizations provide some training for their volunteers, but additional resources would be helpful, including online resources and tools.***

All the representatives interviewed said their organization provides some sort of training or orientation for their youth volunteers. This typically includes 'onboarding' procedures, such as

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providing an overview of the organization, introducing volunteers to members of the organization, and explaining the roles and responsibilities associated with volunteer opportunities. Other types of training or orientation include things like learning kits and handbooks, skills building sessions, mental health and suicide prevention training, and crisis support training. In addition to their current training offerings, organizations would like to provide standard first aid, mental health first aid, cultural sensitivity training, and conflict resolution, among other types of training.

Online resources and tools were also viewed as beneficial to organizations when it comes to supporting program delivery. Examples include online mentorship, orientation or onboarding for volunteers, virtual support for youth-at-risk, AI-generated training scenarios for volunteers, and online resources to connect people interested in volunteering to potential mentors or networks. Leveraging online training resources for volunteers is crucial because it expands training opportunities beyond the limits of in-person sessions, which are restricted by scheduling and physical capacity.

### Limitations and Use of the Research Results

This research was qualitative not quantitative. Qualitative research is designed to reveal a rich range of opinions and interpretations rather than to measure what percentage of the target population holds a given opinion. As such, the results indicate participants' views about the issues explored, but they cannot be generalized to the full population of youth aged 12 to 30 or youth-serving organizations. Additionally, the CSC program youth did not include those in volunteer service placements, so this report reflects only the experiences of CSC program youth who received a micro-grant. With the foregoing in mind, the results of this research will be used by the CSC program to inform a suite of new tools and resources directed at youth that aim to increase youth participation in volunteer service, enrich the service journey, and raise overall awareness of the program.

### Contract Value

The contract value was \$148,905.75 (including HST).

### Political Neutrality Statement

I hereby certify as a Senior Officer of Phoenix SPI that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the *Policy on Communications and Federal Identity* of the Government of Canada and Directive on the Management of Communications. Specifically, the deliverables do not contain any reference to electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, standings with the electorate, or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leader.



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Alethea Woods  
President  
Phoenix SPI

## 1. Introduction

Phoenix Strategic Perspectives (Phoenix SPI) was commissioned by the Learning Branch of Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) to conduct qualitative research with youth and youth-serving organizations for the Canada Service Corps (CSC) program. Phoenix SPI is pleased to present this report to ESDC.

### 1.1 Program Information

The Canada Service Corps (CSC) is a national youth service program within Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) that provides contribution funding to third parties to create volunteer service placements for young Canadians across Canada, with a specific focus on youth from underserved demographics. Organizations funded to deliver service opportunities offer a diverse array of placements and youth-led projects along themes such as promoting diversity, protecting the environment, reconciliation, strengthening youth resilience, and promoting civic and democratic engagement.

The program seeks to promote civic engagement among Canadian youth aged 12-30 by creating and facilitating access to volunteer service opportunities. By empowering youth to engage in service, the CSC aims to support a national movement that encourages youth to give back to their communities. Meaningful and unique opportunities help youth practice leadership, learn new skills, grow personal and professional networks, and gain valuable life experience.

The CSC is working on a new initiative that complements its existing Grants and Contributions programming. This initiative will deliver programming directly to youth. The purpose is to provide an array of new supports geared towards youth that foster a unique CSC identity, or “esprit de corps”, that pushes program participants to recognize and feel connected to the program itself. These new supports will benefit youth who face barriers to participating in the CSC program and create pathways for program alumni to remain civically engaged, advancing a key program priority around expanding and diversifying the program.

### 1.2 Research Background and Objectives

Since delivering programs directly to youth falls outside the existing Grants and Contributions structure, the first year (2024-2025) has focused on consultation and planning. This public opinion research (POR) study was conducted to better understand gaps in youth civic engagement and to improve program quality. The primary objective was to identify supports to help youth engage in volunteer service. As such, the study was designed to collect the following types of feedback:

- Experiences with service opportunities
- Impressions of the CSC program and use of its supports
- Barriers to accessing those supports/programs
- Interventions and/or tools and supports that could improve access to service opportunities
- Opinions on how youth want to consume content from the CSC program

Insights from the research will be used by the CSC Program to inform a suite of new tools and resources directed at youth that aim to increase youth participation in volunteer service, enrich the service journey, and raise overall awareness of the program.

### 1.3 Target Audience

There were two audiences for this research: 1) under-served youth aged 12 to 30 years old, including current and former CSC program participants and youth who have not participated in the CSC program, and 2) the organizations that serve this demographic (not including CSC recipient organizations). Under the Terms and Conditions of the CSC program, under-served youth are defined as:

- Indigenous youth
- Black and racialized youth
- Youth with disabilities
- 2SLGBTQI+ youth
- Newcomer youth
- Youth from official language minority communities
- Youth living in rural or remote areas
- Youth from low-income households

Under-served youth were selected for this POR because previous research has revealed that these youth face the most significant barriers to participating in volunteer activities.

### 1.4 Methodology

To meet the objectives, 20 online focus groups were conducted with under-served youth aged 12 to 30 years and seven online interviews were conducted with representatives of youth-serving organizations from across the country. Specifically:

- Four focus groups and two online interviews were held with current and former participants of the CSC program. All focus group participants were recipients of micro-grants through the CSC program. The groups were segmented by age: one for 15–19-year-olds, one for 20–24-year-olds, and two for 25–30-year-olds. The online interviews were conducted with 12–14-year-olds. All sessions and interviews were in English. Youth-serving organizations that have received CSC funding for micro-grant projects helped promote the study by sharing online and social media advertisements, which directed interested youth to an online questionnaire. The focus groups took place November 26 to 28, 2024, and the interviews were conducted on December 2, 2024.
- Sixteen focus groups were conducted with youth aged 12 to 30 years who had not participated in the CSC program. Groups were segmented by age and region of the country. Four groups were conducted in each of the following regions: Atlantic Canada, Quebec (French), Ontario and the West (including the Territories). One group per region was conducted with each of the four age cohorts: 12–14-year-olds, 15–19-year-olds, 20–24-year-olds, and 25–30-year-olds. The focus groups took place October 29 to November 12, 2024.
- Seven online interviews were conducted with representatives of youth-serving organizations that have not received CSC funding. A mix of organizations were recruited, from national organizations to local organizations. Interviewees had the option to participate in their official language of choice; all interviews were in English and lasted, on average, 45 minutes. The interviews took place between December 9, 2024, and February 24, 2025.

More details about the methodology can be found in [Appendix 1: Technical Specifications](#).

## 1.5 Notes to Reader

- **Report Structure:** The report is organized in two main sections. The first section presents the findings from the research with youth, and the second section the findings from the interviews with youth-serving organizations.
  - The research with youth includes two audiences:
    - 1) current and former participants of the CSC program (CSC program youth) and
    - 2) youth who had not participated in the CSC program (non-CSC program youth).
  - Some questions were asked of all youth, and others just of CSC program youth or non-CSC program youth. Where the youth audience is not specified in the report, it can be assumed that the findings pertain to all youth.
  - The research with youth also includes four distinct age cohorts: 12–14-year-olds, 15–19-year-olds, 20–24-year-olds, and 25–30-year-olds. Differences in feedback by age cohort are presented in a box to off-set them from the main findings. There were no differences based on region.
- **Limitations of the Research:** This research was qualitative in nature, not quantitative. Qualitative research is designed to reveal a rich range of opinions and interpretations rather than to measure what percentage of the target population holds a given opinion. As such, the results indicate participants' views about the issues explored, but they cannot be generalized to the full population of youth and youth-serving organizations. In addition, the CSC program youth did not include those in volunteer service placements, so this report reflects only the experiences of those who received a micro-grant.
- **Research Instruments:** These can be found in the [Appendix](#) along with more information about the technical specifications of the research.

## 2. Detailed Findings

The findings are presented first for [youth](#) and then for [youth-serving organizations](#).

### 2.1 Focus Groups with Youth

This section of the report presents the findings from 20 online focus groups and two interviews conducted with under-served youth aged 12 to 30 years.

#### 2.1.1 Volunteer Experience

##### Most youth have taken part in volunteering activities

Most youth who have not participated in the CSC program (non-CSC program participants) said they have volunteered in their communities, with many currently volunteering or having volunteered multiple times. Participants engaged in various volunteer activities, including:

- Activities related to a specific issue, problem, or cause, such as:
  - poverty and economic hardship—for example, volunteering at a food bank, helping prepare and distribute food baskets, and sorting and organizing clothing for distribution.
  - environmental issues—for example, roadside cleanup, tending community gardens, monitoring ecosystems, and controlling invasive species.
  - health-related issues, such as women’s health, mental health, diabetes, and cancer, involving awareness-raising, answering phones, fundraising, and canvassing.
  - disaster response—for example, filling sandbags during floods and helping hurricane cleanup.
  - animal welfare—for example, dog walking and volunteering at animal shelters.
- Helping at community events, such as sporting events, fairs, music festivals, and powwows. Tasks included helping with set-up, providing first aid, ensuring safety, distributing information, cleaning up, and supervising children’s activities.
- Supporting specific groups, including:
  - Youth through tutoring, peer support, student orientation, swimming lessons, after-school recreational activities, and coaching.
  - Persons with a disability, by coaching and organizing recreational activities.
  - Seniors, by volunteering in a nursing home and providing companionship.

Younger participants (i.e., 12–14-year-olds and 15–19-year-olds) were more likely to have been involved in youth-related activities, such as tutoring and coaching.

### CSC program youth received microgrants for their own projects

Youth who participated in the CSC sponsored programs (CSC program participants) received micro-grants to lead their own service projects, with some receiving multiple grants over the past one to two years.<sup>1</sup> These projects covered a wide range of topics and focused on different communities, including:

- Promoting inter-generational cultural awareness.
- Raising awareness about environmental issues.
- Promoting cultural diversity and anti-racism.
- Supporting youth, with a focus on:
  - developing reading programs for underprivileged children
  - organizing after school activities
  - promoting online safety and digital literacy
  - leadership programs promoting civic engagement
  - after-school programs for newcomers to Canada
  - youth mental health awareness
  - preparation for post-secondary education
- Addressing issues of food insecurity and poverty.
- Raising awareness about community health, including mental and physical health.
- Empowering marginalized groups, including women, Indigenous people, Queer communities.
- Supporting newcomers to Canada, by raising awareness of their challenges and helping with integration.
- Raising awareness about struggles faced Generation Z.
- Providing services for seniors and people with mobility issues.

These projects included a variety of activities, such as exhibits, workshops, presentations, conferences, podcasts, retreats, tournaments, fieldwork, service delivery, fundraising, food preparation and distribution, and creating and sharing resources (including websites).

### Youth take part in volunteer activities for many different reasons

Youth who have volunteered but have not participated in the CSC program shared various reasons for choosing their volunteer opportunities, including:

- Time availability, ensuring the activities fit their schedule and are not too demanding in terms of time requirements.
- Education and career-related considerations, such as looking for experience in their field of study or exploring potential career paths.
- Connection to personal interests, like gardening, helping youth, playing sports, or caring for animals.
- A desire to make a difference, such as helping others or giving back to the community.

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<sup>1</sup> The organizations that helped recruit participants for the research worked with youth who had received a micro-grant. Youth who participated in volunteer service placements were not intentionally excluded from the study, but they could not be reached for recruitment.

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- Connections through school, faith, family, or friends, including school-based programs, religious activities, family traditions, work-sponsored initiatives, or volunteer opportunities shared by friends.
- To fulfill a mandatory community service requirement.
- A personal connection to a cause or issue—for example, volunteering with seniors because one has a relative in a retirement home or supporting single parents because one has experienced that condition.
- Being asked or encouraged to volunteer.
- Dedication to/belief in a specific cause or issue, such as environmentalism.

Education and career-related considerations were the most commonly identified reasons for volunteering among youth aged 15-19 and 20-24. The school environment was a prominent factor in younger participants' decisions to get involved in volunteer activities. Specifically, youth aged 12-14 and 15-19 often said their volunteering took place at school or in the context of school-based activities. Youth in these age groups were also most likely to identify mandatory community service requirements as a reason for volunteering.

Youth in CSC-sponsored programs gave similar reasons for seeking volunteer opportunities as other youth. They often emphasized education and career-related factors, such as gaining experience in a chosen field, building a strong university application, and developing or improving certain skills. Other reasons included the following:

- Wanting to try something new (and having the time to do so).
- Being interested in a particular cause.
- Meeting new people and building a network.
- Seeing volunteering as a fun experience.
- Giving back to one's community and helping people.
- Fulfilling mandatory volunteer requirements for high school.
- Challenging themselves, including managing grants and funding.

### Many types of volunteer experiences are of interest youth

Youth identified numerous kinds of volunteer opportunities most likely to interest them. Among these, the following types were mentioned frequently:

- Opportunities to make a difference by helping address a need, such as distributing food, collecting clothes, environmental cleanup, tutoring, finding homes for animals, fundraising, and canvassing.
- Supporting causes that align with personal values, including financial literacy, mental health, nature and the environment, and homelessness. This also included helping specific groups, such as low-income families, children, students, and seniors.
- Community-focused opportunities emphasizing giving back to the community, feeling connected to the community, drawing attention to community issues, and strengthening a sense of community.
- Education and career-related opportunities, such as gaining practical experience, networking, professional development, and contributing to one's CV.

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- Experiences related to personal interests, such as sports, technology, music, and art.
- Causes/issues that resonate because of personal experience or a personal connection, such as growing up in a single income family or missing out on extra-curricular activities as a child.

In addition to the types of experiences most frequently identified, some participants also expressed interest in using professional skills and knowledge, such as first aid, lifeguarding, counselling, and fundraising; developing new skills and expanding knowledge; socializing and meeting new people; opportunities for which one is asked specifically to volunteer; and one-on-one interactions, allowing for direct engagement with individuals.

The following differences by age were observed:

- Interest in opportunities to make a difference or have an impact by helping address a need was identified most often by the youngest participants (i.e., 12–14-year-olds) and the oldest (i.e., 25–30-year-olds).
- Opportunities related to one’s education and/or career path were most often identified by participants aged 15-19 and 20-24.
- Causes/issues that resonate because of personal experience or a personal connection, and opportunities that allow one to employ professional skills/knowledge were most often identified by participants aged 20-24 and 25-30.

### 2.1.2 Factors Motivating Volunteering

#### Numerous factors might motivate participation in a volunteer opportunity

Youth identified numerous factors that *might* motivate someone their age to volunteer, with participants sometimes reiterating the things most likely to interest them personally. The following factors were identified most often:

- Location, with a focus on distance and ease of commuting.
- Time availability, with flexibility in requirements/commitment level and the ability to coordinate volunteering with other responsibilities.
- Familiarity with others involved, with a focus on taking part with friends or acquaintances.
- Opportunities to meet like-minded people and make new friends.
- The opportunity to make a difference, including the sense of accomplishment and fulfilment that it brings.
- A variety of opportunities, including ones related to personal interests or skills.
- Connection to a course of study or career path.
- A community focus, such as community-sponsored events, opportunities to give back to one’s community, opportunities that strengthen community bonds, and causes that generate widespread community support.

Other motivating factors mentioned less frequently included the following:

- Volunteering is a mandatory requirement, such as for graduation, program admission, or career advancement.

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- Opportunities to gain or develop skills and learn new things.
- Causes or issues with personal significance, based on a direct connection or experience.
- A sense of necessity, such as feeling that an issue depends on volunteer support to be addressed.
- Encouragement/being asked to volunteer.
- Weather and seasonal considerations, such as having more free time in the summer or a preference for outdoor events.
- The opportunity to experience something new/different.
- Incentives for volunteering, such as accreditation, paid leave from work, or tax breaks.
- Awareness of available opportunities.
- A sense of what to expect before beginning the opportunity.

Differences by age included the following:

- The possibility of acquiring or developing skills and learning new things was identified most often by the youngest participants, i.e., 12–14-year-olds.
- Mandatory requirements, as well as the opportunity to meet people and make new friends or acquaintances were identified primarily by younger participants (i.e., 12–14-year-olds and 15–19-year-olds).
- Opportunities related to one's education and/or career path were most often identified by participants aged 15-19 and 20-24.
- Incentives for volunteering and causes that resonate because of a personal connection were identified primarily by participants aged 25-30.
- Opportunities to make a difference or have an impact were identified most often by the youngest participants (i.e. 12–14-year-olds) and the oldest (i.e. 25–30-year-olds).

Youth in CSC sponsored service opportunities identified the same kinds of motivating factors as other research participants. However, when it came to awareness of available opportunities, a few of these youth emphasized the importance of accessible online resources, including connections to a network of people involved in volunteer opportunities.

### **Youth reported that their availability for volunteering is often limited by other commitments**

Youth were asked how many hours each week or month would be reasonable for them to commit to volunteering. They usually responded by identifying ranges of time they could devote on a weekly or a monthly basis. Weekly commitments ranged from 1-2 hours per week to approximately 10 hours per week, but usually did not exceed 5 hours per week. Monthly commitments ranged from 3-4 hours per month to 15-20 hours per month, but usually did not exceed 10 hours per month. Some participants said that the only time they could reasonably devote to volunteering would be a few hours on weekends, while a few stated they currently have no time to devote to volunteering.

The most common reason for limited availability for volunteering was other commitments and priorities, such as school, work, family, friends, and recreational activities. A few participants explained that they have time to devote to volunteering because they do not have many additional commitments, while a few

others mentioned that they would look for flexible volunteer opportunities to accommodate their existing responsibilities.

Additional reasons included the need for relaxation time, transportation and the time it takes to travel to and from volunteer opportunities, and health-related issues affecting availability. Some participants also noted that their commitment would depend on the nature of the opportunity—that is, they would be more willing to devote time to volunteering if it aligned with their career goals.

While participants of all ages emphasized limitations arising from other commitments or priorities, the commitments themselves tended to vary by age group. Specifically,

- Participants aged 12-14 tended to emphasize school (including homework), and recreational/extra-curricular activities.
- Participants aged 15-19 and 20-24 tended to emphasize school/education, work, and the need for relaxation time.
- Participants aged 25-30 tended to emphasize work and family commitments.

### **Youth would volunteer for myriad reasons**

Youth routinely identified the following as the main reasons for getting involved in volunteer opportunities if they were to seek one:

- Helping others and addressing a serious need for volunteers.
- Community engagement and giving back.
- Meeting new people and making friends.
- Developing new skills and broadening their abilities.
- A sense of fulfillment and accomplishment.
- Gaining experience related to their field of study or career path.
- Fulfilling a mandatory requirement (e.g., for school or work).
- Supporting a cause they're passionate about or have a personal connection to.
- Opportunities related to personal interests.
- Filling free time or breaking from routine.
- Trying something new or fun.
- An incentive, such as extra credits or paid leave from work.

Differences by age in terms of motivating factors included the following:

- A desire to help people and an incentive were more often identified by the youngest and oldest participants (i.e., those aged 12-14 and 25-30).
- A mandatory requirement and an opportunity to do something new or fun were most often identified by younger participants (i.e., 12–14-year-olds and 15–19-year-olds).
- Meeting new people and making friends was most often identified by participants aged 15-19.

- Gaining experience related to their field of study or career path was identified mainly by participants aged 15-19 and 20-24).
- Addressing a serious need for volunteers and supporting a cause they're passionate about were most often identified by older participants (i.e., those aged 20-24 and 25-30).
- A sense of fulfillment and accomplishment, breaking routine, and having experiences similar to people one is helping were most often identified by the oldest participants (i.e., 25–30-year-olds).

### 2.1.3 Sources of Information about Volunteering

#### Various potential sources of information about volunteer opportunities

Youth frequently identified the following as potential sources of information about volunteer opportunities:

- Social media and online chat groups, such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, LinkedIn, and WhatsApp.
- Personal networks and word of mouth, including family members, friends or acquaintances, work colleagues, and faith groups.
- Schools and educational institutions, with the youngest participants (i.e., 12–14-year-olds) often mentioning teachers and guidance counselors, while older participants were more likely to identify online sources associated with their educational institutions, such as newsletters, bulletins, volunteer boards.
- Google, with the youngest participants (i.e., 12–14-year-olds) referring to postings or announcements on Google Classroom, and older participants focusing on Google as a search engine to find volunteer opportunities in their community. It was noted that Google can be a good resource for people with a specific health condition who want to volunteer because they can conduct specific searches—for example: 'volunteer opportunities for persons with epilepsy'.
- Local/community-based sources, such as youth centers, community centers, newspapers, radio stations, neighbourhood network websites, and community billboards/newsletters. Specific local sources identified included 'Volunteer Toronto', 'Volunteer Ottawa', and 'Indeed'. Some participants said they would directly contact places where they would like to volunteer, such as animal shelters, retirement homes, bingo halls, conservation authorities, hospitals, and libraries.
- Job fairs.

Research participants who have volunteered often found opportunities through personal networks, school and educational institutions, social media, and local community sources. In contrast, they viewed Google as a tool they would use if they were actively searching for a volunteer opportunity.

When asked how they discovered their volunteer opportunities, youth who participated in a CSC-sponsored opportunity mentioned sources such as word of mouth (friends, family members, teachers, and faith groups), social media (Instagram, Facebook), newsletters, an organization they previously volunteered with, and past involvement in similar opportunities. None of these youth learned about their opportunity directly through the CSC program.

#### Most found it easy to find information and resources about volunteer opportunities

Youth who participated in a CSC-sponsored opportunity were asked how easy or difficult it was to find information and resources about volunteer opportunities. In response, most of these youth said it was

easy or relatively easy to find information and resources about volunteer opportunities. Reasons included prior connection to a network or people involved in volunteer opportunities, living in a large urban center where many such opportunities are available, and numerous opportunities advertised online and through social media.

Participants who described it as difficult or challenging pointed to factors such as not knowing where to start looking, having to spend a lot of time online looking for such opportunities, and living in small/rural communities with limited opportunities. A few described their experience as mixed. While finding volunteer opportunities may not be difficult, they noted that it can be challenging to find opportunities that are a good fit. Additionally, when they do find suitable opportunities, there may be high competition, with many others applying for the same opportunity.

### **2.1.4 Perceived Barriers to Volunteering**

#### **Barriers to starting a volunteer opportunity are most often related to transportation and other commitments**

Youth identified a range of potential barriers to starting a volunteer opportunity, with transportation and other commitments being the most common. Transportation-related challenges included the time and cost of commuting. In addition, a few 12–14-year-old participants mentioned that their parents' schedules impacted their ability to volunteer since they relied on them for rides. Other commitments, such as school, work, and family responsibilities, often left little time for volunteering. Financial considerations were also a factor for some, such as the need to prioritize earning an income to cover expenses and having to hire a babysitter to be free to volunteer.

Other perceived barriers included difficulty finding interesting opportunities; lack of opportunities; requirements and demands associated with opportunities, such as previous experience in area, physical strength, and commitment to a minimum number of hours; health-related issues and disabilities; and shyness or social anxiety, enhanced by apprehensions about volunteering in an area in which one has no experience.

While participants of all ages identified barriers resulting from other commitments, the commitments tended to vary by age group. Participants aged 12-14 tended to focus on school and recreational/extra-curricular commitments, those aged 15-19 and 20-24 tended to emphasize school and work commitments, while those aged 25-30 were more likely to emphasize work and family commitments.

Other age-related differences included the following:

- Lack of opportunities was identified mostly by 12–14-year-olds.
- Inability to find interesting opportunities was identified mostly by 15–19-year-olds.
- Shyness/social anxiety was identified by younger participants (i.e., 12-14 and 15–19-year-olds).

### Many different challenges/barriers associated with volunteering

Challenges or barriers that young people felt they would or could face (and which a few said they did face) in a volunteer opportunity included the following:

- Issues related to the sponsoring organization, such as lack of training, orientation or guidance, poor administration or management, rigid schedules, unreasonable or unclear expectations, and unfair treatment of unpaid volunteers (i.e., lack of respect, lack of appreciation).
- Problems of suitability, such as the opportunity not meeting expectations, not getting along with others involved in the opportunity, discovering one is not suited to the requirements, and requirements that are too demanding.
- Conflicts with other commitments, like school, work, or extracurricular activities, leading to stress, fatigue, or the need for paid work.
- Health-related issues or disabilities.
- Difficulty being punctual.
- Difficulties organizing activities or events, such as bureaucratic red-tape or weather factors.
- Safety concerns—for example, volunteering in unsafe areas, especially at night, working with populations that might feel intimidating or make one feel unsafe, or commuting home alone after a late shift.
- Social anxiety, such as being outside one's comfort zone.
- Racism—for example, people not opening the door to canvassers because of their race.

Difficulty being punctual and safety concerns were identified by the youngest participants (i.e. 12–14-year-olds), and social anxiety/being outside one's comfort zone were identified by younger participants (i.e. 12–14-year-olds and 15–19-year-olds).

The following types of challenges were identified only by youth who participated in a CSC-sponsored opportunity:

- Requirements or obligations associated with the opportunity—for example, the time commitment, timelines being too restrictive, having to submit receipts for spending, and working with people in different time zones.
- Issues related to the funding, such as it being insufficient or a lack of guidelines about how to use funding.
- Incurring out-of-pocket expenses.
- Having to shift from in-person to online during the pandemic.

### Participants offered numerous suggestions to address challenges/barriers

Suggestions from research participants about how to address challenges or barriers included the following:

- Including opportunities in locations on or close to public transit routes, subsidizing transportation costs, offering carpooling options, and organizations providing transportation.

- Suggestions related to sponsoring organizations, including ...
  - Offering support for volunteers, such as mental health support, training or orientation, and mentoring.
  - Being flexible in terms of requirements like scheduling.
  - Having better up-front communication about requirements, responsibilities, and expectations.
  - Providing meaningful/rewarding opportunities.
- Volunteering with friends/people one knows, for support and camaraderie.
- Feedback from previous participants about their experience, including what issues they encountered and how they dealt with them.
- Access to searchable databases of sponsoring organizations, to increase the likelihood of finding a suitable opportunity.
- Incentives for volunteering, such as tax deductions or paid leave from work.

### 2.1.5 Perceived Benefits of Volunteering

#### Numerous benefits and skills associated with volunteering

Potential skills and benefits associated with volunteering included communication skills, networking, making new friends, teamwork skills, social skills (such as empathy and relatability), and increased self-confidence. Additional skills and benefits identified with some frequency included the following:

- Leadership skills
- Work/career-related skills
- Organizational skills, such as time management and problem-solving skills
- Patience
- Emotional growth
- A stronger sense of community
- A better understanding of one's community
- A sense of personal fulfillment and accomplishment.

Youth who had participated in volunteer opportunities felt they had acquired these types of skills and benefits as a result of their volunteering experience.

Acquiring or improving social skills was most often identified by the youngest participants (i.e., 12–14-year-olds), while networking and acquiring career-related skills were most likely to be identified by 15–19-year-olds and 20–24-year-olds.

Youth who participated in CSC volunteer service opportunities were nearly unanimous that their overall experience in these opportunities was positive. Contributing factors included increased self-confidence, skill development, mentorship and support, connecting with like-minded people and networking, resume-building, and reimbursement for some expenses (e.g., food, transit).

A few said that their overall experience was mixed, describing it as generally positive but also stressful at times due to the unexpected workload.

## 2.1.6 Awareness and Impressions of the Canada Service Corps

### Limited awareness of CSC

Only a few participants who had volunteered through a CSC opportunity were aware of the Canada Service Corps, either before or after their experience. Those who were aware had only a limited understanding, knowing that CSC partners with organizations, seems to operate nationwide, supports youth, provides funding through micro-grants, and funds a variety of volunteer opportunities through youth-serving organizations. No one was aware of the supports and resources available to youth through the CSC program.

Awareness of CSC was also limited among other youth (i.e., non-CSC program participants). Only a few youth thought they had heard of the Canada Service Corps prior to this research. This included seeing a reference to it on Instagram and hearing the name through word of mouth, but without recalling anything concrete about it or forming any impression of it.

### Generally positive impressions of CSC volunteer service opportunities

Due to limited knowledge of CSC, many who took part in CSC volunteer service opportunities felt unable to give an overall impression of the program. Among those who did, overall impressions were positive and based on the following: the program offers youth volunteering opportunities, empowers youth by providing funding opportunities, supports small-scale projects, helps develop skills and project management experience, and fosters community engagement with a genuine commitment to local initiatives.

Participants in CSC volunteer service opportunities who had other volunteer experiences generally viewed the CSC program favourably compared to their other experiences. They appreciated the overall organization, the funding/micro-grants, the autonomy over projects, the variety of interesting opportunities, and CSC's partnerships with smaller organizations. At the same time, some found CSC opportunities more demanding, time consuming, and sometimes too micro-managed. A few said that CSC opportunities were hard to compare to other experiences, because they offered more independence and flexibility, whereas other volunteer roles had clearer responsibilities and outcomes.

### Several ways to improve CSC volunteer service opportunities suggested by youth

Participants in CSC volunteer service opportunities identified the following ways in which the CSC program could better meet needs and expectations:

- Extend project timelines to make it easier to meet requirements.
- Provide more guidance and orientation on what to expect and the types of issues or challenges one might encounter, especially for those with no experience working with grants.
- Ensure that partnering organizations are responsive and respond to questions promptly.
- Seek out feedback/more feedback from participants about their experience.
- Ensure youth are aware of available supports and resources before the project begins.
- Ensure that opportunities include some in-person experience (as opposed to being entirely online).
- Facilitate networking and connectedness between participants and other potential projects (e.g., by providing lists of organizations partnering with CSC).

### 2.1.7 General Perceptions of Volunteering

#### Most research participants said they will continue to volunteer

Most youth who participated in the research have continued volunteering or plan to continue volunteering in the future. CSC youth were asked why they have done so or plan to do so after their Canada Service Corps placement. Reasons given to explain why included the following:

- To further skills development.
- Volunteering supports career growth by providing relevant experience.
- Volunteering is rewarding and provides a sense of purpose and accomplishment.
- Because one can see the impact of volunteering.
- Because it strengthens the connection to one's community.
- Volunteering provides opportunities to make connections and network.
- Because there is always a need that can be addressed through volunteering.

Youth who had not participated in the CSC program were not asked why they plan to continue volunteering. However, some of the younger research participants (i.e., 12–14-year-olds and 15–19-year-olds) said they would continue to volunteer because of the mandatory requirements for school, to strengthen applications to post-secondary institutions, to acquire and improve skills, to help people or their community, to make connections, and because they find it rewarding/fulfilling.

Mandatory requirements and strengthening applications to post-secondary institutions were identified by 12–14-year-olds. A few 15–19-year-old participants volunteered that they would likely stop volunteering once they begin their post-secondary education, especially if they attend an institution outside their community. The main reason was lack of time because of education commitments, but it was also noted that volunteering occurred in the context of high school and that once they leave this environment, there is less likelihood of volunteering, at least for the foreseeable future.

Non-CSC youth who are currently volunteering and who plan to continue doing so were asked if they would continue with the same organization or look for a different opportunity. In response, some said they would remain where they are now, and some said they would move on. Reasons for staying included wanting to see the organization's progress, a history of involvement with a particular organization, friendships and connections, comfort and familiarity, and convenience, such as the organization being easily accessible and offering flexible schedules.

Reasons for wanting to find another opportunity included convenience, specifically finding an opportunity closer to home, wanting a variety of volunteering experiences, wanting to volunteer wherever there is a need, finding opportunities more in line with one's chosen course of studies or career-path, and wanting volunteer experiences unrelated to one's work responsibilities.

#### Most would consider volunteering in an international setting

Most youth said they would be interested in volunteering in an international setting, though this was less likely among the youngest participants (i.e., 12–14-year-olds). The most frequently given reason was the

opportunity to travel and the possibility of combining travel with volunteer work (especially if the travel was paid for). Other reasons included the following:

- Exposure to new learning experiences/different cultures.
- The possibility of learning a new language.
- The opportunity to support underprivileged communities abroad.
- The ability to reference such experience on CVs or university applications.
- To challenge oneself and get out of a familiar environment.
- To make friends and connections in other countries.
- Interest in specific issues including international environmentalism and international development.
- To develop a greater appreciation of life in Canada.
- To be able to visit relatives overseas.

### Widespread impression that volunteering is valued in their community

Many youth felt that their communities appreciate and recognize the value of volunteering. Reasons provided to explain why included the following:

- Positive feedback and recognition, such as supportive reactions on social media, expressions of gratitude, and acknowledgment or recognition through school awards or volunteer appreciation events.
- Encouragement from teachers, their religious group, and family members to volunteer.
- A community tradition of volunteering, fostering an expectation to give back.
- The number of volunteer opportunities and volunteers in their community.
- Seeing the impact of volunteering on their community.
- Community turnout/response to events/activities.
- The importance attributed to volunteer experiences, such as it being a mandatory school requirement or prospective employers valuing such experience.

On the other hand, a small number of participants felt that volunteering is not appreciated in their community. Reasons for this impression included hearing or seeing little about volunteering in their community, difficulty finding opportunities in their community, acquaintances disapproving of or discouraging volunteering, and lack of recognition and appreciation on the part of sponsoring organizations, such as a feeling of being treated like free labour or being expected to be grateful for the opportunity rather than valued for contributions. Some said they do not know if volunteering is appreciated in their community, with uncertainty about this most often expressed by the youngest participants, i.e. 12–14-year-olds.

### Most believe volunteering opportunities are accessible to them

Most participants said they think that volunteering opportunities are accessible to them and to members of their communities. Ways of making them (more) inclusive included the following:

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- Address challenges related to commuting—for example, carpooling, locating opportunities on/closer to public transportation routes, and locating opportunities in easily accessible venues.
- Increase awareness of what is available through better publicizing of volunteer opportunities—for example, through social media, youth hubs, schools, and community centers.
- Make opportunities easy to find through user-friendly online resources, such as a central registry or database of opportunities in a community, with the ability to narrow search for opportunities based on various criteria.
- Allow for more flexibility in terms of scheduling volunteer hours.
- Expand opportunities for persons with disabilities and ensure accommodations are available.
- Provide a wider variety of opportunities, including ones that are likely to appeal to youth.
- Simplify the application processes for volunteer opportunities.
- Provide training, preparation and orientation as part of the opportunity.
- Emphasize inclusivity by ensuring all community members are welcome, with no discrimination against 2SLGBTQI+ individuals or ethnic communities.

Better publicizing of volunteer opportunities was identified across all age groups, but mainly by 12–14-year-olds, 15–19-year-olds and 20–24-year-olds. Simplifying the application processes and making opportunities accessible to persons with a disability were identified primarily by 15–19-year-olds and 25–30-year-olds.

### Youth suggested a variety of ways to improve youth engagement in civic activities

Numerous ways of improving youth engagement in civic activities were identified by research participants, including the following:

- Make volunteering more attractive to youth by appealing to their interests and the idea that volunteering can be fun—for example, combining community service with enjoyable activities, making giving back a fulfilling and fun experience. This suggestion was made mostly by younger participants (i.e., 12–14-year-olds and 15–19-year-olds), a few of whom observed that volunteering tends to be presented to them as a something mandatory.
- Incentivize participation by providing a stipend to help cover the cost of meals or transportation, free bus passes, gift cards, paid leave from work, tax breaks, access to scholarships after completing a certain number of volunteer placements, free training, certificates, and more study and career-related opportunities.
- Emphasize the benefits of volunteering—for example, the difference it can in the community, the types of skills one can develop, and the opportunity to meet like-minded people.
- Provide opportunities for volunteering in groups or with friends, it being noted that this could help address issues of shyness or anxiety that might make someone reluctant or apprehensive about volunteering. This suggestion was made by 15–19-year-old participants.
- Make it easier to find opportunities. Ways of doing so included creating a central registry for volunteering opportunities, ensuring opportunities are promoted through school communications platforms, advertising opportunities on youth hubs, and providing searchable databases with a capacity to search for opportunities related to study streams or career paths.

- Ensure that participating organizations provide clarity regarding expectations/requirements.
- Introduce the idea of volunteering at an early age, so that youth become familiar with it.
- Provide more opportunities in rural/remote communities.
- Engage local celebrities/influencers to promote volunteering.
- Provide testimonials from former volunteers and individuals impacted by the work of volunteers.
- Provide opportunities that are inclusive, that allow for the participation of persons with a disability, visible minorities, and members of the 2SLGBTQI+ community.
- Provide opportunities in areas that tend to resonate with youth, such as health care/mental health, hunger and disease prevention, newcomers and social/cultural integration, climate change and the environment, anti-racism, marginalized groups, social justice issues, and international causes (e.g., UNICEF).

### 2.1.8 Training and Preferred Methods of Learning

#### Most youth who participated in volunteer activities felt prepared

Nearly all non-CSC youth participants said they are ready to volunteer, with those who felt unprepared citing lack of time or transportation challenges. Moreover, most youth (CSC and non-CSC) who had participated in volunteer activities felt prepared before they started their opportunity.

Non-CSC youth who felt unprepared, at least to some extent, pointed to their belief that no amount of preparation can fully anticipate the challenges of a new experience, such as unexpected demands, shyness or being outside of one's comfort zone, which was identified by the youngest participants (i.e., 12–14-year-olds), lack of information and communication about the role, responsibilities or requirements, requirements not corresponding to expectations, and the absence of training or orientation.

Participants in CSC volunteer service opportunities who said they did not feel prepared tended to link their lack of preparation to the micro-grant component of their opportunity. This included lack of experience with grants/receiving a grant for the first time, and lack of clarity about requirements associated with their grant. Other reasons included limited prior knowledge about the project beyond the grant aspect and being new to Canada and still adjusting.

#### Youth have experience with training in some form

Nearly all research participants who had not taken part in the CSC program said they have taken some form of training. Motivations for taking part in training included on the following:

- Training is a mandatory requirement or a pre-requisite, either for work, and education or training program, or for volunteering.
- Career advancement and professional development, including keeping skills current, acquiring transferable skills, enhancing their CV, employability or competitiveness in the job market, and receiving a salary increase for successful training completion.
- Training is free or comes with compensation.
- To get better at a recreational activity, usually a sports-related activity, it being occasionally emphasized that the training itself was fun.

- Being encouraged to take training.
- Self-development—for example, to become more self-confident, to learn something new, to improve or acquire skills or knowledge.
- To be prepared to help people, such as training in first aid.

Taking training because it was mandatory and for career advancement or professional development were reasons most often identified by older youth, i.e. 20–24-year-olds and 25–30-year-olds. Taking training to become better at a recreational activity and because of being encouraged to do so were identified by the youngest participants, i.e. 12–14-year-olds.

Some research participants who took part in a CSC volunteer service opportunity said they had the opportunity to participate in a training or orientation session before starting their placement. Training topics included budgeting, project management, reporting requirements, recruiting volunteers, raising awareness of a project, overviews of the sponsoring organization, and getting to know the staff members, such as team building activities.

Areas in which training or orientation would have been helpful included resume building, communications skills, and strategies for sustaining the project beyond the initial volunteer service opportunity. It was also noted that it would have been helpful to have an opportunity to meet and talk with previous participants in the program and/or experts with experience in fields related to the project in question.

### **Collectively, youth prefer a variety of different ways of learning new things**

When asked how they prefer to learn new information, youth used the following terms, or variations of them: in-person, hands-on, interactively, and through videos or graphics. Other ways of expressing their preferred ways to learn new information included the following:

- Working with an expert
- In stages/gradually/step-by-step
- Through research on the Internet
- Repetition
- Through a mix of theory and practice
- Live/in-real time (in-person or online)
- Guided tutorials
- By watching someone else do something, then trying on one's own
- One-on-one
- By asking questions/Q&A
- Through team activities
- Online
- Hard copy

Following this, youth were asked specifically if they prefer to learn new things online, in-person, through short videos, through interactive tutorials, or through written guides. In response, participants often said they like to learn new things in more than one way, with in-person learning most often included among preferences, and learning through written guides included least often.

Non-CSC participants were also asked why they prefer learning new things in these ways. The perceived advantages associated with each of these approaches included the following:

- **In-person learning:** In explaining why they prefer learning new things in-person, youth mentioned:
  - The ability to engage in dialogue, ask questions, and receive answers.
  - The opportunity to learn by doing or through a hands-on approach, which was described by some as how they learn best, and by others as important in various fields, such as skilled trades and first aid.
  - The capacity to learn through interaction, for example, sharing thoughts, building synergies, and doing group activities.
  - The ability to get one-on-one attention.
  - The ability to capture details.
  - Access to immediate assistance.
  - It provides opportunities for supervision, guidance and shadowing.
  - The ability to validate learning through review and repetition.
  - It is easier to pay attention and remain engaged.
  - The opportunity to meet people, including people interested in the same things.

Some specified that their appreciation for in-person learning increased because of the pandemic, when they had to shift completely to online learning.

- **Online learning:** Youth who included online learning among their preferred ways of learning new things routinely emphasized convenience, with a focus on flexibility, ease of scheduling, and not having to change locations. Additional advantages associated with online learning included the ability to learn at one's own pace, access to learning tools, such as whiteboards and share screen functions, habit/being used to learning online, and the ability to rewatch recorded sessions. A few participants specified that online learning is better suited to their learning needs. This included finding it easier to focus/be engaged in an online environment, having access to closed captioning, and finding it easier to learn in an online environment because of sensitivity to lighting.
- **Interactive tutorials:** One of the main advantages associated with interactive tutorials was their ability to combine the convenience of online learning with the benefits of an in-person approach. This included the capacity to learn by doing, to learn through interaction with others, and access to assistance and supervision. Other perceived advantages included the following:
  - They provide a structured approach that makes it easier to process and retain information.
  - They provide opportunities to validate learning through immediate feedback.
  - The ability to rewatch recorded sessions.
  - Finding it easier to focus/be engaged because of a condition, such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.
- **Short videos:** The main perceived benefit of short videos was the visual dimension, with some describing themselves as visual learners, and others emphasizing that they are used to learning in this way (e.g., watching YouTube videos). Other perceived benefits of short videos included the following:
  - They can be rewatched.
  - They are quick/to the point.
  - Material can be easily presented thematically, in separate videos.
  - It is a good learning method for people with a limited attention span.
  - It is easier to focus/concentrate when the timeframe is shorter.

- **Written guides:** As noted above, written guides were least often identified as a preferred way of learning. Moreover, it was occasionally noted that their effectiveness as a learning tool depends on their length, as well as how they are written and structured. That said, those who did identify them as a preferred way of learning pointed to the following to explain why:
  - The ability to learn at one's own pace.
  - The ability to focus/absence of distractions.
  - The ability to write down thoughts/highlight text.
  - The ability to re-read/review.
  - Ease of access/being readily available.

### Many digital tools used by participants

Participants collectively identified numerous types of digital tools they like to use for school and work. These include Microsoft 365 applications, graphic design tools, collaboration platforms, educational software and learning platforms, organizational tools, file transfer software, cloud storage tools, and generative artificial intelligence. Google products were the most commonly mentioned tools across all four age groups. The tools identified by members of each age group are presented below.

#### 12–14-year-olds:

- Brightspace
- Canva
- Gmail
- Google apps
- Google calendar
- Google classroom
- Google docs and slides
- IXL
- Khan Academy
- Microsoft Office
- Microsoft Teams
- Moodle
- My Education
- PowerSchool
- Wikipedia

#### 15–19-year-olds:

- Adobe
- Adobe premiere rush
- Air drop
- Brightspace
- CapCut
- ChatGPT
- Figma
- Google classroom
- Google docs
- Google Earth
- Google Meet
- Google Tasks
- iCloud
- Khan academy
- ManageBac
- Microsoft 365 (one note)
- Microsoft Office
- Microsoft Teams
- Mosaic effect tool
- Notion
- Omnivox
- One Drive
- PowerSchool
- Spotify
- 'To do list' apps
- YouTube

#### 20–24-year-olds:

- Any digital tool for sharing
- Blackboard Learn
- Canva
- CapCut

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- ChatGPT
- Desire2Learn
- Discord
- Email apps
- GitHub
- Google (search engine)
- Google Agenda
- Google Calendar
- Google Drive
- Google Forms
- Google Meet
- Google Workspace
- Microsoft 365
- Microsoft Teams
- Slack
- Thinkific
- TikTok
- 'To do list' apps
- Twitter/X
- Udemy
- Workday
- Zoom

### 25–30-year-olds:

- Adobe editing tools
- Canva
- ChatGPT
- Coursera
- Drop box
- Google Calendar
- Google Docs
- Google Drive
- Google Sheets
- Grammarly
- Microsoft co-pilot
- Microsoft Office
- Microsoft Teams
- Notion
- Online chat functions
- Resume templates
- Sharing docs
- TikTok
- WhatsApp
- YouTube
- Zoom

## 2.1.9 Awareness and use of Government of Canada online resources

### Limited awareness of Government of Canada online resources

Awareness of Government of Canada online resources for youth and youth-serving organizations was limited among research participants. The only resources identified were employment-focused and included the Canada Summer Jobs portal, the Federal Student Work Experience Program, Job Bank, and Eco Canada. A few participants who used such services to look for employment described them as useful and user-friendly. A few identified resources which are not Government of Canada resources, including the National Youth Council, Kids Help Phone, and Youth Wellness Hubs. None of the youth who had not participated in the CSC program were aware of the Canada Service Corps.

### Youth-related resources that participants would like to see in a GoC online platform

Youth identified a variety of resources they would like to see in a Government of Canada online platform directed at youth. The types of resources included the following<sup>2</sup>, with those identified most often preceded by an asterisk (\*).

- \*Resources related to financial literacy, such as budgeting, managing money, taxes, loans, and credit ratings.

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<sup>2</sup> The list includes all types of resources identified by participants, regardless of whether they come under the responsibility of the Government of Canada. The list provides an indication of things that matter to youth participants.

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- \*Sources of financial assistance and funding available for youth, such as grants, scholarships, and benefits.
- \*Employment-related information and resources, including careers in the federal public service, interactive databases of job opportunities, career path tools/resources, how to start a business, guidance related to resume building and covering letter preparation.
- \*Resources related to mental health and wellbeing, including resources for youth at risk, support and counselling services, drug and addiction services, suicide prevention services, and help lines.
- Educational resources, including strategies for studying, educational software and learning platforms (both identified by 12–14-year-olds), and information on choosing a post-secondary education pathway, such as what to consider when choosing a post-secondary program, and employment opportunities associated with various fields of study.
- Housing-related information, such as assistance finding affordable housing and tenant rights.
- Consumer protection resources, such as how to protect oneself against scammers and fraudsters.
- Government software programs one should know about/be familiar with.
- A central registry to connect youth with volunteer opportunities, with the ability to search by sector, topic or region of the country.
- An online forum allowing youth to connect and share experiences and resources related to various topics, issues or concerns.
- A gateway to provincial or territorial youth services programs.

## 2.2 Interviews with Organizations

Participants in this phase of the research represent organizations that provide programs and services for youth. This includes addressing issues of food insecurity among youth in the community, supporting youth at risk (with a focus on homelessness), supporting Black, racialized, and newcomer youth, providing mental health support and counselling to youth, providing settlement and integration services for young immigrants and refugees, and helping connect youth to nature. In total, seven in-depth interviews were completed with organizations.

Before the interview began, each participant was informed that the Canada Service Corps (CSC) is a national youth service program within Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) that provides contribution funding to national and regional organizations to create volunteer service placements for young Canadians across Canada.

### 2.2.1 Overall impressions of Canada Service Corps

#### Limited awareness of CSC, but organizations are interested in working with the program

Most interviewees could offer no impression of the CSC because they knew nothing about it or had only heard the name CSC prior to being contacted for the research. The description of CSC<sup>3</sup> provided to participants who were unaware of it prior to being contacted for the research elicited positive reactions. These positive reactions took the form of expressions of interest in learning more about CSC and the programs it offers and partnering with it to offer volunteer opportunities for youth. Reasons for being interested included the following:

- The organization relies on volunteers to help deliver various programs and services and is interested in increasing volunteer opportunities through partnerships.
- A desire to expand youth volunteer opportunities within the organization, with a focus on longer-term opportunities.
- A growth in clientele, resulting in a growing demand for services, but limited capacity to meet needs through internal resources.
- A desire to network and collaborate with other organizations (including governments) offering youth-related programs and services.

#### By design, the programs offered by organizations vary

Various types of volunteer opportunities for youth were offered by participating organizations to promote civic engagement or volunteering opportunities among youth. These opportunities included peer mentoring and tutoring services, childcare and child-minding services, hands-on experience in preparing

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<sup>3</sup> Interviewees were informed of the following:

- The Canada Service Corps is a Government of Canada program that seeks to promote civic engagement among Canadian youth aged 12-30 by creating and facilitating access to volunteer service opportunities.
- By empowering youth to engage in service, the Canada Service Corps aims to support a national movement that encourages youth to give back to their communities.
- The CSC provides funding to organizations to deliver service opportunities. Interested organizations can apply for funding through a Call for Proposals.

and serving meals, assistance in preparing and testing program-related resources, tending community gardens, assistance at events, such as set-up, and outreach activities, such as advocacy and fundraising.

The main objectives of these volunteer opportunities were described in the following ways by interviewees:

- Providing learning opportunities for youth, including raising their awareness about various issues.
- Promoting the idea of civic engagement at an early age.
- Providing experience in community engagement.
- Providing hands-on experience to youth interested in social work as a potential career path.
- Providing experience-based learning related to issues surrounding food insecurity.
- Helping youth develop various skills through helping others, with a focus on leadership skills.
- Giving youth a chance to see the positive impact of their volunteering.
- Building lasting relationships between volunteers and the clients they interact with.
- Leveraging volunteerism to provide programs and services to the organization's clientele.

### Various channels considered effective for generating interest in programming

A variety of channels were considered effective in generating interest in programming to promote civic engagement or volunteering. The channels, and the reasons for their perceived effectiveness, included the following:

- Social media, because of its popularity among young people, the ability to reach a wide audience, and its potential for generating momentum, for example, 'chatter' and sharing of information.
- Word of mouth, as it comes from multiple sources, such as friends, teachers, former participants, and includes first-hand experiences.
- Schools (including universities), because they provide direct access to youth, and students often need to fulfill a mandatory requirement in volunteering to graduate.
- Organizations' websites, because youth will often explore or be directed to organizational websites in the hope of finding volunteer opportunities.
- Community newsletters, because of their local focus and readiness to support community initiatives.

These same sources were identified as ways youth typically hear about the organization and its youth programming.

### Organizations encounter issues recruiting youth participants

Representatives of organizations identified various types of issues that they tend to encounter or might encounter when it comes to recruiting youth participants for their programs. These included the following:

- Transportation and distance, especially the time required to commute.
- Incidental costs that participants can incur, for example, meals and transportation.
- Availability/scheduling issues resulting from other obligations and responsibilities, such as school, family, or recreational activities.

- Making opportunities meaningful to youth, with a focus on making the experience rewarding and making youth feel they have had an impact.
- Issues arising from the nature of the opportunity or lack of experience in volunteering. Such issues can relate to:
  - punctuality and time management;
  - working with others in a group setting;
  - understanding roles and responsibilities;
  - underestimating what volunteering can require in terms of dedication;
  - knowing what to do (and not to do) if and when a problem arises; and
  - first-hand exposure to realities one has not experienced before, such as homelessness, poverty, and youth trauma.
- Youth participants that are facing personal, family, or financial challenges.

### 2.2.2 Recruitment and Training

#### Various types of training or orientation provided by the organizations

All the representatives interviewed said their organization provides some sort of training or orientation for their youth volunteers. This typically includes ‘onboarding’ procedures, such as providing an overview of the organization, introducing volunteers to members of the organization, and explaining the roles and responsibilities associated with volunteer opportunities. Supervision, shadowing and mentoring were also sometimes identified as a type of orientation.

Additional types of training or orientation included the following:

- Learning kits and handbooks related to the opportunity
- Skills building sessions/orientation
- Simulation exercises to help volunteers understand the types of issues they may encounter
- Mental health and suicide prevention training
- Training on how to support someone in crisis
- ‘What you can expect’ video.

It was also noted that the amount and type of training and orientation would vary based on the nature and the length of the volunteer opportunity, for example, longer-term opportunities would involve more training than short-term ones.

#### Additional learning/training resources would be helpful

In addition to their current offerings, organizations would like to provide the following learning and training resources:

- Standard first aid
- Mental health first aid, e.g. dealing with trauma
- Suicide intervention training
- Cultural sensitivity training
- Conflict resolution
- Online training modules
- More formalized onboarding processes

- Orientation videos
- Resources designed specifically for Indigenous youth, with a focus on motivating them to participate in volunteer opportunities.

### Profile of youth participants varies

Interviewees noted that the profile of youth participants in their volunteer opportunities can and does vary. Moreover, to the extent that there is a 'typical' profile of youth participants, it tends to be limited to age and education level, with participants typically ranging between the ages of 15 and their early 20s (i.e., high school and post-secondary students). Beyond that, the profile tends to vary by organization, with individual representatives identifying their typical youth participant by gender (i.e., mostly female) or career-path interest (e.g., health sciences, social work or youth care).

According to participants, youth volunteers tend to come with different levels of preparation, but rarely are they either fully prepared or completely unprepared. Generally, youth are ready in the sense that they are genuinely interested in helping and empathetic (qualities seen as essential for some volunteer opportunities). However, areas in which youth may need assistance or training include overcoming shyness or social awkwardness, improving organizational and time management skills, and developing initiative and leadership abilities.

### 2.2.3 Views on youth engagement

#### Different factors seen to motivate young people to volunteer

When asked what youth think about being civically involved in their communities, participants highlighted key factors that motivate young people to volunteer. These included mandatory requirements, the desire to gain skills, seeking new experiences, interest in a specific study or career path, a personal connection to an issue, and a general desire to help others or make a difference in their community. Moreover, it was observed that these factors are not mutually exclusive, with multiple factors influencing a young person's decision to get involved.

Participants also noted that youth perspectives on civic involvement can evolve, often because of volunteer experience(s). For example, someone may start volunteering to fulfill a mandatory requirement but continue for additional reasons after a positive experience. This highlights the importance of meaningful and rewarding volunteer opportunities, as they can encourage long-term civic engagement.

Participants felt they could not fully comment on whether youth prefer to volunteer locally, abroad, or both. Those who did comment felt that the choice likely depends on various factors, such as personal motivations, age, life circumstances, personality, and prior volunteer experience. For example, someone driven by a desire to give back to their community may prefer local volunteering, while those seeking new experiences might be drawn to opportunities abroad.

#### Youth experience a variety of barriers to participating in volunteer opportunities

Participants identified a variety of challenges and barriers that can prevent youth from engaging in civic activities. These included the following:

- Timing, scheduling and availability.
- Incidental costs associated with volunteering, e.g., food, transportation.
- Transportation issues, e.g., distance to/location of activities, lack of efficient public transportation.

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- Economic/financial considerations, such as the need to work/generate income.
- Obligations/responsibilities, such as school or childcare.
- Lack of opportunities, especially in rural/remote communities.
- Lack of incentives to volunteer.
- The perception of civic engagement as no more than a mandatory requirement to be fulfilled. In this regard it was noted that Indigenous youth tend to see community engagement as part of their culture or way of life.
- Dealing with issues of their own, such as mental health or self-esteem issues.

The ways in which these organizations have tried to address some of these barriers to participation include the following:

- Providing snacks and meals to volunteers.
- Covering transportation costs, such as bus passes or taxi fares.
- Providing reference letters to incentivize volunteering.
- Increasing virtual opportunities for volunteering to address transportation issues.
- Partnerships with other organizations to widen awareness of opportunities.
- Offering childcare/child-minding services.
- Providing evening opportunities for volunteering to accommodate people with responsibilities like work and school.

The types of support considered to have the biggest impact when it comes to mitigating barriers to access for youth included access to financial support (e.g., vouchers for meals and transportation), more effective public transportation systems, more online opportunities for volunteering, more opportunities (especially in small and remote communities), and more emphasis on the benefits of volunteering.

### Several things might motivate youth to continue volunteering

Participants identified several things that they felt would motivate youth to continue volunteering, including the following:

- Having a memorable/fun experience.
- A sense of accomplishment/of having made a difference.
- Learning experience/skills acquisition.
- Access to mentors to help guide/orient them towards other opportunities.
- Meaningful opportunities, with an emphasis on obtaining experience related to an educational or career path.
- Being appreciated/receiving meaningful recognition for volunteering.
- Seeing it as a venue for connecting with like-minded people/making lasting connections.
- Encouraging volunteering through incentives like reference letters.

### 2.2.4 Digital tools, supports and networking

#### A few online resources and tools viewed as beneficial

Online resources and tools identified as beneficial to organizations when it comes to supporting program delivery included the following:

- Online mentorship/orientation/onboarding for volunteers.
- Virtual support for youth-at-risk.

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- Best practices when it comes to preparing volunteers to work with vulnerable populations.
- Mentorship training.
- Use of AI to create training scenarios for volunteers.
- Online resources or opportunities to connect people interested in continuing to volunteer to potential mentors or networks.

During this discussion, it was noted that leveraging online training resources for volunteers is crucial because it expands training opportunities beyond the limits of in-person sessions, which are restricted by scheduling and physical capacity.

### Myriad incentives might motivate more engagement with GoC programming

Participants identified a number of incentives that would motivate organizations and youth to engage more with Government of Canada programming. These included the following:

- Stable, multi-year funding for youth volunteer opportunities.
- Emphasis on the value-added for non-profits to engage more with the Government of Canada.
- Assistance with capacity-building, with a focus on providing more long-term volunteer opportunities.
- Recognition that volunteer placements carry administrative requirements that organizations may not be properly staffed to provide for adequately.
- Reduce/simplify the administrative requirements associated with applications for government programs (e.g., quarterly reporting), requirements which can be especially onerous for small organizations.
- Allow Indigenous Peoples to take the lead on projects that involve Indigenous youth.
- Centralize programs and services related to such programming in one location to improve awareness about possibilities offered through the Government of Canada.
- Organize periodic outreach activities, such as information sessions for interested organizations.
- Provide tips and guidance on application processes.
- Revise application processes to make them more efficient and less time-consuming (e.g., eliminate the use of faxing and the requirement for wet signatures).
- Make reporting requirements more meaningful by including impact statements and anecdotal feedback from service recipients, rather than just procedural checkboxes.

### Most organizations network/collaborate with other organizations

Most participants indicated that their organization collaborates or networks with other youth-serving organizations. Examples include the following:

- Client referrals between organizations that provide additional/complementary services.
- Developing an integrated youth services network/hub.
- Collaboration with organizations in smaller communities.
- Sharing ideas and resources related to youth engagement.
- Collaboration on organizing outreach activities, e.g., volunteer fairs at universities.

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Perceived benefits from such collaboration include pooling of resources (described as important when resources tend to be scarce), the ability to coordinate an offering of complementary services, sharing of knowledge, expertise or best practices, and helping ensure that people in need can obtain services in their own (smaller) communities.

Based on their networking, participants identified the most common challenge faced by organizations like theirs as operating with limited resources, including difficulty accessing stable, multi-year funding for their operations. This challenge was described as exacerbated by an increased demand for the types of programs and services they offer.

## 2.3 Conclusions

This research study was designed to collect data from youth and youth-serving organizations to inform a suite of new tools and resources directed at youth that aim to increase youth participation in volunteer service. What follows below is a brief discussion of the findings of the research as they relate to the study objectives.

### **Awareness of the CSC program and existing supports and resources is limited.**

Awareness of the CSC program was limited, even among youth who participated in CSC-sponsored volunteer service opportunity, and none of the youth who participated in a CSC-sponsored opportunity were aware that they had access to supports and resources<sup>4</sup> provided by the Canada Service Corps program. CSC might want to consider the value of stronger program branding efforts, so the Canada Service Corps is more recognizable to youth and youth-serving organizations.

Along with recognition of the program would come awareness of CSC's supports and resources. The existing supports and resources address some of the barriers to participating in volunteer service opportunities identified by research participants. For example, youth identified transportation-related challenges, specifically the cost of commuting. Raising awareness among youth that CSC provides transportation-related support for program participants might reduce financial barriers to access for some under-served youth.

### **Supporting virtual service opportunities with organizations might encourage more youth to become involved in the CSC program.**

In addition to transportation-related challenges, youth mentioned time constraints as barriers to participation. Other commitments, such as school, work, and family responsibilities, leave little time for volunteering. These competing priorities are further compounded by the travel time required to reach volunteer placements. Should virtual service opportunities become readily available, more youth might start volunteering. Without having to commute to the organization, volunteering becomes more accessible from the perspective of time and cost. Additionally, virtual opportunities might limit a barrier to participation for youth with disabilities—accessibility—as well as increase access for youth with mental health issues, such as social anxiety. Furthermore, youth from rural communities mentioned having fewer volunteer opportunities available to them. Removing the need to participate in person should increase the opportunities for youth living outside urban areas.

### **To foster lifelong volunteering, the quality of the service placements is important.**

Some youth experienced difficulties with their sponsoring organization which may serve as a disincentive to volunteer again, either with the same organization or a different organization. Issues included lack of training, poor management, rigid schedules, unreasonable or unclear expectations, and unfair treatment of unpaid volunteers, such as lack of respect or appreciation. Youth are motivated to volunteer for myriad reasons, including meeting like-minded people, making a difference, giving back to their community, and having a fun, memorable experience. If the experience of the volunteer service opportunity is not positive, youth may not prioritize civic engagement in the future. Contributions agreements between the CSC

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<sup>4</sup> Supports and resources include living expenses, equipment or services that enable virtual service opportunities, mentorship, dependent care, transportation, accommodation, meals, mental health supports, career development supports, specialized services or referrals to appropriate resources, arrangements or equipment for persons with disabilities, certificates, small tokens of appreciation made available to the primary participant of a service opportunity.

program and funding recipient organizations might want to include an information guide for youth participants to be distributed by the recipient organizations. This guide could include information about supports and resources provided by the CSC program.

**When considering supports and resources for CSC’s new programming, think digital but also consider the feasibility of in-person options.**

The research findings provide valuable insights for CSC on the types of supports and resources that would be most beneficial to youth. Given their familiarity with digital tools for school and work, interactive and digital resources would be well-suited to their needs. However, youth expressed a preference for in-person learning. While in-person sessions may not always be feasible, real-time online sessions would be a better alternative than asynchronous learning methods, such as recorded webinars and training videos.

In terms of learning supports, mentorship opportunities could benefit youth new to volunteering while also providing a way for CSC program alumni to stay engaged in civic activities. For youth applying for a micro-grant to lead their own service project, having a mentor for guidance would be especially valuable. The micro-grant component was a key factor in some youth feeling unprepared for their CSC-sponsored service opportunity. In addition to mentorship opportunities, youth would benefit from skills training offered by the CSC program, particularly in project management, communications and interpersonal skills, and project budgeting.

**To advertise CSC’s new programming initiative, use multiple distribution channels, including third-party organizations.**

Since the Canada Service Corps is not a widely recognized brand among youth, CSC will need to actively promote its new initiative to ensure greater awareness and engagement. The research findings suggest that social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, LinkedIn, and WhatsApp, will reach the target audience. In addition, partnerships with schools and educational institutions will be useful since many youth appear to get their information on volunteering from these sources.

## Appendix 1: Technical Specifications

### Focus groups with under-served youth

- A set of 20 online focus groups were held with under-served youth aged 12 to 30. Of the 20 youth focus groups, four groups and two online interviews included current and former participants of the CSC program who received a micro-grant, while the remaining 16 groups involved youth who had never participated in the CSC program. All youth groups were divided by age: 12–14-year-olds, 15–19-year-olds, 20–24-year-olds, and 25–30-year-olds.
- The table below presents the distribution of the focus groups:

Date	Session	Region	Audience	Language
<b>Groups with non-CSC program participants</b>				
October 29	Group 1:	Ontario	25- to 30-year-olds	English
October 29	Group 2:	Ontario	20- to 24-year-olds	English
October 30	Group 3:	Ontario	12- to 14-year-olds	English
October 30	Group 4:	Ontario	15- to 19-year-olds	English
November 4	Group 5:	West + North	20- to 24-year-olds	English
November 4	Group 6:	West + North	25- to 30-year-olds	English
November 5	Group 7:	West + North	15- to 19-year-olds	English
November 5	Group 8:	West + North	12- to 14-year-olds	English
November 5	Group 9:	Atlantic	25- to 30-year-olds	English
November 5	Group 10:	Atlantic	20- to 24-year-olds	English
November 6	Group 11:	Atlantic	12- to 14-year-olds	English
November 6	Group 12:	Atlantic	15- to 19-year-olds	English
November 7	Group 13:	Quebec	20- to 24-year-olds	French
November 7	Group 14:	Quebec	25- to 30-year-olds	French
November 12	Group 15:	Quebec	15- to 19-year-olds	French
November 12	Group 16:	Quebec	12- to 14-year-olds	French
<b>Groups with current and former CSC participants</b>				
November 26	Group 17:	Canada	15- to 19-year-olds	English
November 27	Group 18:	Canada	20- to 24-year-olds	English
November 28	Group 19:	Eastern Canada	25- to 30-year-olds	English
November 28	Group 20:	Western Canada	25- to 30-year-olds	English
December 2	2 Interviews	Canada	12- to 14-year-olds	English

- All participants belonged to at least one of the under-served groups:
  - Indigenous youth
  - Black and racialized youth
  - Youth with disabilities
  - 2SLGBTQI+ youth
  - Newcomer youth
  - Youth from official language minority communities
  - Youth living in rural or remote areas
  - Youth from low-income households.

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- Ten youth were recruited for up to eight participants to attend each focus group. Turn-out was excellent. In all, 172 youth participated in the study.
- In terms of recruitment:
  - The groups with non-CSC program participants were recruited using CRC Research's opt-in database, which includes approximately 450,000 adults aged 18+. This database has been developed over many years based on cold calling, referrals, previous research, and advertisements.
  - The groups with current and former CSC participants were recruited using youth-serving organizations that were participating in the CSC program (at the time of the study) to promote the research to potentially eligible youth using online and social media advertisements. These advertisements directed interested youth to an online recruitment screener, which was used to identify individuals who met the research criteria.
- Consent to participate was obtained for all youth under the age of 16.
- During recruitment, youth were asked if they required any accommodation to support their participation. A few requested live transcription, which was provided.
- All participants were paid an honorarium of \$125 to thank them for taking part in the study. The honorarium was paid via e-transfer or an Amazon gift card.
- All sessions were 90 minutes in length. They were conducted using Zoom (Webinar) and were recorded and transcribed. Participants were informed of this during the recruitment and reminded of the recording and transcription by the moderator in advance of the discussion.
- The data analysis included a review of the video-recordings of each session, the transcripts, as well as the notes taken by the moderators during each session. First, common words and concepts in the videos, transcripts and notes were identified for each area of investigation. Following the content analysis, the same approach was used to identify patterns or broader themes in the qualitative data. Unlike the content analysis, however, the moderators were looking for patterns across questions and by audience. The intent was to find similarities (majority views) and differences (minority views) in the data that yielded insights. No data analytical software was used as part of this analysis. All data were reviewed and analyzed by members of the research team.
- The fieldwork took place October 29 through December 2, 2024.
- All steps complied with *The Standards for the Conduct of Government of Canada Public Opinion Research*.

### Interviews with representatives of youth-serving organizations

- In addition to the focus groups with youth, a set of seven one-on-one online interviews were conducted with representatives of youth-serving organizations. Any organizations that had participated in the CSC program were not eligible.
- The organizations selected for recruitment were drawn from across the country in order to ensure a diversity of views. Two interviews were conducted with organizations that are national in scope, two with organizations based in Western Canada, one in Ontario, one in Quebec, and one in Atlantic Canada.

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- The individual who participated in the interview was a senior official who was familiar with their organizations' programs for youth.
- Interviews were designed to last approximately 45 minutes and were conducted in the individuals' official language of choice using MS Teams; all interviews were in English. The interview questions were shared in advance.
- The fieldwork took place from December 9, 2024, through February 24, 2025.

## Appendix 2: Research Instruments

### Recruitment Screener – Youth

#### Introduction

Hello/Bonjour, my name is [INSERT]. I'm calling from Phoenix Strategic Perspectives, a Canadian public opinion research firm. Would you prefer to continue in English or French? / Préférez-vous continuer en français ou en anglais?

[RECRUITER NOTE: FOR ENGLISH GROUPS, IF THE INDIVIDUAL WOULD PREFER TO CONTINUE IN FRENCH, PLEASE CONTINUE IN FRENCH AND RECRUIT FOR THE FRENCH GROUPS. FOR THE FRENCH GROUPS, IF THE INDIVIDUAL WOULD PREFER TO CONTINUE IN ENGLISH, PLEASE CONTINUE IN ENGLISH AND RECRUIT FOR AN OPEN ENGLISH GROUP [BUT, FOR GROUPS OUTSIDE OF ONTARIO/THE EASTERN TIME ZONE, FIRST CONFIRM THAT THE SESSION TIME IS ACCEPTABLE].

We are organizing a series of discussion groups on issues of importance to Canadians, on behalf of the Government of Canada.

- **GROUPS WITH YOUTH 16+:** We are looking for people aged 16 to 30 who would be willing to participate in an online discussion group. Is there anyone in your household who is aged 16 to 30? If so, may I speak with this individual?

01. No [THANK AND DISCONTINUE]

02. Yes

- a. Same person. CONTINUE WITH "INFORMATION"
- b. Someone else. ASK TO SPEAK TO INDIVIDUAL
  - i. REPEAT "INTRODUCTION"
  - ii. GO TO "INFORMATION"
- c. Not available SCHEDULE CALL-BACK

- **GROUPS WITH YOUTH 12-15:** We are looking for people aged 12 to 15 who would be willing to participate in an online discussion group. Are you a parent or legal guardian of a child between the ages of 12 and 15?

01. No [THANK AND DISCONTINUE]

02. Yes

- a. Same person. CONTINUE WITH "CONSENT"
- b. Someone else. ASK TO SPEAK TO INDIVIDUAL
  - i. REPEAT "INTRODUCTION"
  - ii. GO TO "CONSENT"
- c. Not available SCHEDULE CALL-BACK

#### Information

The online focus groups are being conducted on behalf of the Canada Service Corps, which is a Government of Canada initiative designed to support youth engagement in community service. Participation is completely voluntary and your decision to participate or not will not affect any dealings

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you may have with the Government of Canada. We are interested in hearing your opinions; no attempt will be made to sell you anything or change your point of view. The information collected will be used for research purposes only and handled according to the [Privacy Act of Canada\\*](#). The format is an online discussion with up to 8 participants led by a research professional from Phoenix Strategic Perspectives. All opinions will remain anonymous, and views will be grouped together to ensure that no individual can be identified. Those who participate will receive a cash gift to thank them for their time.

May I continue?

01. Yes [GO TO Q1]
02. [No\\*\\*](#) [TERMINATE]

### Consent

As a parent of, or legal guardian to, a youth living in your household, we are requesting your permission to ask your child a few questions to determine their eligibility to participate in an online focus group. The online focus groups are being conducted on behalf of the Canada Service Corps, which is a Government of Canada program designed to support youth engagement in community service. The group will last up to 90 minutes and your child will receive \$125. If your child is eligible to participate, and agrees to take part, you will be asked to complete a consent form, and your child will be asked to sign a waiver to acknowledge that the focus group will be recorded.

May we have your permission to ask your child some further questions to see if they qualify for the focus group which will take place on **[INSERT DATE]** at **[TIME]**?

01. Yes [REPEAT THE INTRODUCTION AND INFORMATION FOR THE CHILD AND GO TO Q3]
02. Yes, but child is not home [ASK FOR THE CHILD'S NAME AND ARRANGE A TIME TO CALL BACK]
03. No [TERMINATE]

### RECRUITER NOTES:

- A. \*IF ASKED: The personal information you provide is governed in accordance with the Privacy Act and will not be linked with your name on any document including the consent form. In addition to protecting your personal information, the Privacy Act gives you the right to request access to and correction of your personal information. You also have the right to file a complaint with the Privacy Commissioner of Canada if you think your personal information has been handled improperly. The final report written by Phoenix SPI will be available to the public from Library and Archives Canada (<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/>).
- B. \*\*IF A POTENTIAL PARTICIPANT INDICATES THAT PARTICIPATING ONLINE IS NOT POSSIBLE, SAY: Thank you for letting us know. You yourself do not need to have a computer and internet connection to participate. If you have a friend or family who could provide you with access to a computer, a high-speed Internet connection, and a Webcam for the online session, you would be able to participate. Would this be possible?
- C. IF ANYONE QUESTIONS THE VALIDITY OF THE RESEARCH, INVITE THEM TO GO ONLINE TO CRIC RESEARCH VERIFICATION SERVICE AND ENTER PROJECT NUMBER: 20240816-PH771.

EN: <https://www.canadianresearchinsightscouncil.ca/rvs/home/>

FR: <https://www.canadianresearchinsightscouncil.ca/rvs/home/?lang=fr>

D. WHEN TERMINATING A CALL WITH SOMEONE, SAY: Thank you for your cooperation. We already have enough participants who have a similar profile to yours, so we are unable to invite you to participate.

**Questions**

The focus group will take place online on the **(INSERT DATE/TIME)** and will last up to **an hour and a half (1.5 hours)**.

1. Would you be interested in taking part in this study?
  01. Yes
  02. No [TERMINATE]
  
2. Before we invite you to attend, I need to ask you a few questions to ensure that we get a good mix of participants. This will take 5 minutes. May I continue?
  01. Yes
  02. No [TERMINATE]
  
3. We’ve been asked to speak to participants of all different ages. May I have your age please?
 

RECORD: \_\_\_\_\_ . [RECRUIT A MIX BY AGE WITHIN STUDY SPECIFICATIONS.]

  01. 12 to 14
  02. 15 to 19
  03. 20 to 24
  04. 25 to 30
  05. Prefer not to answer [TERMINATE]
  
4. The focus groups are going to be online sessions held over the Internet. Participants will need to have access to a computer, a high-speed Internet connection, and a Webcam to participate in the group. The Webcam will need to be turned on for the duration of the session. Would you be able to participate under these conditions?
  01. Yes
  02. No [TERMINATE]
  03. Prefer not to answer [TERMINATE]

**Under-served Youth – RECRUIT A MIX IN EACH GROUP. All segments to be represented across the 16 groups, but each group does not need to include all 8 segments.**

<b>Segment</b>	<b>Eligibility</b>
Indigenous youth	Q9=02, 03, or 04
Black and racialized youth	Q12=01
Youth with disabilities	Q12=02
2SLGBTQI+ youth	Q12=03
Newcomer youth	Q11=2019 or later
OLMC	Q5=02 or 03
Youth living in rural or remote areas	Q6=11, 12, or 13 or Q14= <del>X0</del> X or Q15=01 or 02
Youth from low-income households	Q13=01, 02, or 03

## Qualitative Research with Youth and Youth-serving Organizations - Canada Service Corps

5. Are you a member of an Official Language Minority Community (OLMC)? This refers to a community of people whose preferred language is not the majority language in their province or territory.
  01. No
  02. Yes, I am an English speaker who resides in Quebec [SKIP Q6. RECRUIT TO ONTARIO]
  03. Yes, I am a French speaker who resides outside of Quebec
  04. Prefer not to answer [terminate]
  
6. In which province or territory do you live? This information is needed to make sure you are assigned to a focus group that takes place in your time zone. [DO NOT READ LIST] [FOR THE GROUPS IN ATLANTIC CANADA AND THE WEST + NORTH, AIM FOR A MIX OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH OF THE PROVINCES/TERRITORIES.]
  01. British Columbia [RECRUIT TO WEST + NORTH]
  02. Alberta [RECRUIT TO WEST + NORTH]
  03. Saskatchewan [RECRUIT TO WEST + NORTH]
  04. Manitoba [RECRUIT TO WEST + NORTH]
  05. Ontario [RECRUIT TO ONTARIO]
  06. Quebec [RECRUIT TO QUEBEC]
  07. New Brunswick [RECRUIT TO ATLANTIC CANADA]
  08. Nova Scotia [RECRUIT TO ATLANTIC CANADA]
  09. Prince Edward Island [RECRUIT TO ATLANTIC CANADA]
  10. Newfoundland and Labrador [RECRUIT TO ATLANTIC CANADA]
  11. Yukon [RECRUIT TO WEST + NORTH]
  12. Northwest Territories [RECRUIT TO WEST + NORTH]
  13. Nunavut [RECRUIT TO WEST + NORTH]
  14. Prefer not to answer [TERMINATE]
  
7. Have you ever participated in any volunteer activities in your community? [RECRUIT A MIX IN EACH GROUP]
  01. Yes [CODE AS PARTICIPANT]
  02. No [SKIP TO Q9] [CODE AS NON-PARTICIPANT]
  03. Prefer not to answer [TERMINATE]
  
8. [IF Q7=01] How often do you typically engage in volunteer activities? [RECRUIT A MIX IN EACH GROUP]
  01. Weekly
  02. Monthly
  03. A few times a year
  04. Once a year
  05. Every few years
  06. I have volunteered one time only
  07. Prefer not to answer
  
9. Are you First Nations, Métis, or Inuk (Inuit)?
  01. No, not an Indigenous person
  02. Yes, First Nations [GO TO Q12] [CODE AS INDIGENOUS]
  03. Yes, Metis [GO TO Q12] [CODE AS INDIGENOUS]
  04. Yes, Inuk (Inuit) [GO TO Q12] [CODE AS INDIGENOUS]

**Qualitative Research with Youth and Youth-serving Organizations - Canada Service Corps**

05. Prefer not to answer
10. [IF Q9=01] Were you born in Canada?
01. No
  02. Yes [GO TO Q12]
  03. Prefer not to answer
11. [IF Q10=01] In what year did you come to Canada?
01. Record year: \_\_\_\_\_ [CODE AS NEWCOMER IF YEAR = 2019 OR LATER]
  02. Can't recall
  03. Prefer not to answer
12. Do you identify....
01. ...with a racialized population group? *Racialized groups include, among others, South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Arab, Latin American, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean and Japanese.*
  01. ...as a person with a disability?
  02. ...as part of the 2SLGBTQI+ community?
  03. Prefer not to answer
13. What was the total annual income of all members of your household combined, before taxes, in 2023?
01. Under \$20,000 [CODE AS LOW INCOME]
  02. \$20,000 to just under \$30,000 [CODE AS LOW INCOME]
  03. \$30,000 to just under \$40,000 [CODE AS LOW INCOME]
  04. \$40,000 to just under \$50,000
  05. \$50,000 to just under \$60,000
  06. \$60,000 to just under \$80,000
  07. \$80,000 to just under \$100,000
  08. \$100,000 to just under \$150,000
  09. \$150,000 and above
  10. Prefer not to answer
14. What are the first 3 characters of your postal code?
01. FSA/1st 3 characters: \_\_\_\_\_ [CODE AS RURAL IF 2<sup>ND</sup> DIGIT IS '0'] [GO TO Q16]
  02. Can't recall [GO TO Q15]
  03. Prefer not to answer [GO TO Q15]
15. [IF Q14=02 OR 03] Which of the following best describes the size of your community?
01. Rural area (less than 1,000 people) [CODE AS RURAL]
  02. Small population centre (1,000 to 29,999 people) [CODE AS RURAL]
  03. Medium population centre (30,000 to 99,999 people)
  04. Large urban population centre (100,000+ people)
  05. Prefer not to answer [ONLY TERMINATE IF NOT QUALIFIED FOR ANY SEGMENT]
16. Which gender do you identify as? [RECRUIT A MIX IN EACH GROUP]
01. Female

- 02. Male
- 03. Other; please specify \_\_\_\_\_
- 04. Prefer not to answer [TERMINATE]

### Industry Screening and Consent

- 17. Have you ever attended a discussion group or taken part in an interview on any topic that was arranged in advance and for which you received money for your participation?
  - 01. Yes
  - 02. No [GO TO Q21]
  - 03. Prefer not to answer [TERMINATE]
  
- 18. [IF Q17=01] When did you last attend one of these discussion groups or interviews?
  - 01. Within the last 6 months [TERMINATE]
  - 02. Over 6 months ago
  - 03. Prefer not to answer [TERMINATE]
  
- 19. [IF Q18=02] Thinking about the groups or interviews that you have taken part in, what were the main topics discussed?  
RECORD: \_\_\_\_\_ [TERMINATE IF RELATED TO COMMUNITY SERVICE OR VOLUNTEERING]
  
- 20. How many discussion groups have you attended in the past 5 years?
  - 01. Fewer than 5
  - 02. 5 or more [TERMINATE]
  - 03. Prefer not to answer [TERMINATE]
  
- 21. [IF Q20=01] The discussion group will be recorded. The recordings will be used only by the research professional to assist in preparing a report on the findings and they will be destroyed once the report is final. Do you agree to be recorded for research purposes only?
  - 01. Yes [GO TO Q23]
  - 02. No
  - 03. Prefer not to answer
  
- 22. [IF Q21=02 OR 03] It is necessary for the analysis process for us to record the session as the moderator needs this material to complete the report. The recordings will be used only by the research firm to assist with writing the report and will not be shared. Now that I've explained this, do I have your permission for recording?
  - 01. Yes
  - 02. No [TERMINATE]
  - 03. Prefer not to answer [TERMINATE]
  
- 23. [IF Q22=01] There may be some people from the Government of Canada observing the groups. They will not take part in the discussion. They will be attending to hear your opinions firsthand although they may take their own notes and confer with the moderator to discuss additional questions to ask the group. Do you agree to be observed by employees of the Government of Canada?

- 01. Yes
- 02. No [TERMINATE]
- 03. Prefer not to answer [TERMINATE]

### Invitation to Participate

You qualify to participate in one of our virtual discussion groups. The discussion will be led by a researcher from the public opinion research firm, Phoenix Strategic Perspectives. The group will take place on [DAY OF WEEK], [DATE], at [TIME], and will last **an hour and a half** [1.5 hours]. If you participate, you will receive an honorarium of **\$125** for your time.

24. Are you willing to attend?

- 01. Yes
- 02. No [TERMINATE]
- 03. Prefer not to answer [TERMINATE]

25. [IF Q24=01] We will provide the focus group moderator with a list of participants' names so that they can sign you into the group. We will provide your first name and the first letter of your last name as well as your responses to this questionnaire. Do we have your permission to do this? I assure you it will be kept strictly confidential.

- 01. Yes [GO TO Q27]
- 02. No
- 03. Prefer not to answer

26. [IF Q25=02 OR 03] We need to provide the focus group moderator with the names of the people attending the focus group because only the individuals invited are allowed in the session and the moderator must have this information for verification purposes. Only your first name will be visible when you join the focus group session. Now that I've explained this, do I have your permission to provide your name and profile to the moderator?

- 01. Yes
- 02. No [TERMINATE]
- 03. Prefer not to answer [TERMINATE]

27. Do you require accessibility accommodations to support your participation in this research?

- 01. Yes. RECORD: \_\_\_\_\_
- 02. No

28. May I have your email address so that we can also send you an email message with the information you will need about the focus group?

ENTER EMAIL ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

Information regarding how to participate will be sent to you by email in the coming days. The email will come from Phoenix SPI and the address will be [research@phoenixspi.ca](mailto:research@phoenixspi.ca). You will be asked to log into the online session 10 minutes prior to the start time. **If you do not log in on time, you may not be able to participate and you will not receive an honorarium.**

## **Qualitative Research with Youth and Youth-serving Organizations - Canada Service Corps**

As we are only inviting a small number of people to attend, your participation is very important to us. If for some reason you are unable to attend, please call us so that we can get someone to replace you. You can reach us at [INSERT NUMBER] at our office. Please ask for [INSERT NAME].

Someone will call you the day before to remind you about the session. Will you please confirm your name and contact information for me?

Thank you very much for your time and willingness to participate in this research.

## Recruitment Tools – CSC Participants

### Email Recruitment Advertising

**YOUR VOICE MATTERS....  
CALLING ALL CURRENT AND PAST CANADA SERVICE CORPS PARTICIPANTS**

The Government of Canada is conducting a research study about youth volunteering and civic engagement and would like your input.

If you or someone you know participated (or are participating) in the Canada Service Corps program, you/they might be eligible for the research study.

Research participants will be asked to take part in a 90-minute online focus group.

To show our thanks for your time and valuable input, each participant will receive a cash incentive for taking part.

**To see if you qualify for the study, please click the link below and complete the online questionnaire.**

**LINK**

This research study is being conducted by Phoenix Strategic Perspectives (Phoenix SPI), a Canadian public opinion research firm, on behalf of the Government of Canada, and specifically the Learning Branch of Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC).

### Social Media (or Other Online) Recruitment Advertising





### **CSC Youth**

**Share your experience!**

Apply to take part in an online focus group.

Participants receive a **cash** reward.

Interested? Click the link in the caption.



### **CSC Youth**

**Share your experience!**

Apply to take part in an online focus group.

Participants receive a cash reward.

Interested? Click the link in the caption.

## Recruitment Screener – CSC Participants

### Landing Page

Thank you for your interest in this research study. This short online questionnaire will take no more than 5 minutes to complete. The purpose of the online questionnaire is to confirm the eligibility of individuals interested in participating in this research study. If you wish to switch languages, please use the language selection button located in the top left corner of each screen.

### Background information

- This research study is being conducted by Phoenix Strategic Perspectives (Phoenix SPI), a Canadian public opinion research firm, on behalf of the Government of Canada, and specifically, the Canada Services Corps (CSC) program.
- The study is designed to help CSC build a better understanding of the existing gaps in supporting youth in civic engagement to increase the quality of its youth programming.

### About the research study

- The study will take place in October 2024 and involves online focus groups.
- The focus groups will last up to 90 minutes.
- During the focus group, you will be able to share your opinions in a moderated videoconference with other youth who participated in the CSC program.
- People who qualify for the study and take part will receive \$125 to thank them for their time.

### How does the online questionnaire work?

- Your decision to complete the online questionnaire is completely voluntary and confidential.
- Your decision on whether or not to participate in the study will not affect any dealings you may have with the Government of Canada, now or in future.

### What about your personal information?

- Your personal information will be collected by Phoenix SPI in accordance with the applicable provincial privacy legislation or the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA).
- Phoenix SPI supports and strictly adheres to the Standards for the Conduct of Government of Canada Public Opinion Research, industry standards and guidelines for Internet and other types of research. To view Phoenix SPI's privacy policy, please [click here](#).

### Need to contact us?

PROGRAMMING NOTE: "Contact us" will open a new window that will contain the following:

For more information about this research, contact Phoenix SPI by email at [research@phoenixspi.ca](mailto:research@phoenixspi.ca).

### Eligibility Screener

1. Are you...
  01. 12 to 15 [GO TO CONSENT]
  02. 16 or older [GO TO Q3]
  03. Prefer not to answer [TERMINATE]

*[TERMINATING MESSAGE: Thank you for your cooperation. We already have enough participants who have a similar profile to yours, so we are unable to invite you to participate.]*

---

## Parent/Guardian Consent

2. [IF Q1=01] Thank you for your interest in this research study. Before you can complete the questionnaire, we need the consent of your parent or guardian. Please ask them to read the information below.

As a parent of or legal guardian to a youth living in your household, we are requesting your permission to ask your child a few questions to determine their eligibility to participate in an online focus group about their experience with the Canada Service Corps (CSC) program. The CSC is a program of the Government of Canada that promotes civic engagement among youth. Click [here](#) for more information about the focus groups.

I consent to my child completing the online questionnaire to determine their eligibility to participate in an online focus group.

01. Yes  
02. No [TERMINATE]

Thank you for your support of this important research. Please provide the following information in case we need to contact you about your child's participation.

01. Name:  
02. Telephone number:  
03. Email address:

Before hitting the NEXT button, please have your teen available to begin answering the following questions.

---

3. In which of the following age categories do you belong?

01. 12 to 14  
02. 15 to 19  
03. 20 to 24  
04. 25 to 30  
05. 30 or older  
06. Prefer not to answer [TERMINATE]

4. Are you currently participating in the CSC program?

01. Yes [GO TO Q6]  
02. No  
03. Prefer not to answer

**Qualitative Research with Youth and Youth-serving Organizations - Canada Service Corps**

5. [IF Q4=02 OR 03] When did you participate in the CSC program? If you've participated more than once, please select the date of your most recent participation.
- 01. 2023-2024
  - 02. 2022-2023
  - 03. 2021-2022
  - 04. 2020-2021
  - 05. 2019-2020
  - 06. 2018 or later
  - 07. Prefer not to answer [TERMINATE]
6. Did you receive a...?
- 01. Service placement
  - 02. Micro-grant
  - 03. Prefer not to answer

**Under-served Youth – RECRUIT A MIX IN EACH GROUP. All segments to be represented across the 4 groups, but each group does not need to include all 8 segments.**

<b>Segment</b>	<b>Eligibility</b>
Indigenous youth	Q7=02, 03, or 04
Black and racialized youth	Q10=01
Youth with disabilities	Q10=02
2SLGBTQI+ youth	Q10=03
Newcomer youth	Q9=2019 or later
OLMC	Q11=02 or 03
Youth living in rural or remote areas	Q13= <del>X0</del> X or Q14=01 or 02 or Q15=11, 12, or 13
Youth from low-income households	Q12=01, 02, or 03

7. Are you First Nations, Métis, or Inuk (Inuit)?
- 01. No, not an Indigenous person
  - 02. Yes, First Nations [GO TO Q10] [CODE AS INDIGENOUS]
  - 03. Yes, Metis [GO TO Q10] [CODE AS INDIGENOUS]
  - 04. Yes, Inuk (Inuit) [GO TO Q10] [CODE AS INDIGENOUS]
  - 05. Prefer not to answer
8. [IF Q7=01] Were you born in Canada?
- 01. No
  - 02. Yes [GO TO Q10]
  - 03. Prefer not to answer
9. [IF Q8=01] In what year did you come to Canada?
- 01. Record year: \_\_\_\_\_ [CODE AS NEWCOMER IF YEAR = 2019 OR LATER]
  - 02. Can't recall
  - 03. Prefer not to answer [terminate]

## Qualitative Research with Youth and Youth-serving Organizations - Canada Service Corps

10. Do you identify....
01. ...with a racialized population group? Racialized groups include, among others, South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Arab, Latin American, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean and Japanese. [CODE AS BLACK OR RACIALIZED]
  02. ...as a person with a disability? [CODE AS YOUTH WITH DISABILITY]
  03. ...as part of the 2SLGBTQI+ community? [CODE AS 2SLGBTQI+]
  04. Prefer not to answer
11. Are you a member of an Official Language Minority Community (OLMC)? This refers to a community of people whose preferred language is not the majority language in their province or territory.
01. No
  02. Yes, I am an English speaker who resides in Quebec [skip Q13 and code as 'Quebec' / 06]
  03. Yes, I am a French speaker who resides outside of Quebec
  04. Prefer not to answer
12. What was the total annual income of all members of your household combined, before taxes, in 2023?
01. Under \$20,000 [CODE AS LOW INCOME]
  02. \$20,000 to just under \$30,000 [CODE AS LOW INCOME]
  03. \$30,000 to just under \$40,000 [CODE AS LOW INCOME]
  04. \$40,000 to just under \$50,000 [CODE AS LOW INCOME]
  05. \$50,000 to just under \$60,000
  06. \$60,000 to just under \$80,000
  07. \$80,000 to just under \$100,000
  08. \$100,000 to just under \$150,000
  09. \$150,000 and above
  10. Prefer not to answer
13. What are the first 3 digits of your postal code?
01. FSA: \_\_\_\_\_ [CODE AS 'RURAL' IF 2<sup>ND</sup> DIGIT IS '0'] [GO TO Q15]
  02. Can't recall [go to Q14]
  03. Prefer not to answer [go to Q14]
14. [IF Q13=02 OR 03] Which of the following best describes the size of your community?
04. Rural area (less than 1,000 people) [CODE AS RURAL]
  05. Small population centre (1,000 to 29,999 people) [CODE AS RURAL]
  06. Medium population centre (30,000 to 99,999 people)
  07. Large urban population centre (100,000+ people)
  08. Prefer not to answer
15. In which province or territory do you live? This information is needed to make sure you are assigned to a focus group that takes place in your time zone.
01. British Columbia
  02. Alberta
  03. Saskatchewan
  04. Manitoba
  05. Ontario

- 06. Quebec
- 07. New Brunswick
- 08. Nova Scotia
- 09. Prince Edward Island
- 10. Newfoundland and Labrador
- 11. Yukon [CODE AS RURAL]
- 12. Northwest Territories [CODE AS RURAL]
- 13. Nunavut [CODE AS RURAL]
- 14. Prefer not to answer [TERMINATE]

16. Which gender do you identify as? [RECRUIT A MIX IN EACH GROUP]

- 01. Female
- 02. Male
- 03. Other; please specify \_\_\_\_\_
- 04. Prefer not to answer [TERMINATE]

### Consent

17. The focus groups are going to be online sessions held over the Internet. Participants will need to have access to a computer, a high-speed Internet connection, and a Webcam to participate in the group. The Webcam will need to be turned on for the duration of the session. Would you be able to participate under these conditions?

- 01. Yes
- 02. No
- 03. Prefer not to answer [TERMINATE]

18. The discussion group will be recorded. The recordings will be used only by the research professional to assist in preparing a report on the findings and they will be destroyed once the report is final. Do you agree to be recorded for research purposes only?

- 01. Yes [GO TO Q20]
- 02. No
- 03. Prefer not to answer

19. [IF Q18=02 OR 03] It is necessary for the analysis process for us to record the session as the moderator needs this material to complete the report. The recordings will be used solely to assist with writing the report and will not be shared. Now that I've explained this, do I have your permission for recording?

- 01. Yes
- 02. No [TERMINATE]
- 03. Prefer not to answer [TERMINATE]

20. [IF Q19=01] There may be some people from the Government of Canada observing the groups. They will not take part in the discussion. They will be attending to hear your opinions firsthand although they may take their own notes and confer with the moderator to discuss additional questions to ask the group. Do you agree to be observed by employees of the Government of Canada?

- 01. Yes

02. No [TERMINATE]

03. Prefer not to answer [TERMINATE]

### Invitation to Participate

21. Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire. Someone from Phoenix SPI will reach out to discuss your participation in a focus group. Please provide your name, telephone number and email address:

*EXIT MESSAGE: Thank you very much for your time and willingness to participate in this research.*

*EXIT LINK: <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/youth/canada-service-corps.html>*

## Consent Form

### Background information

The online focus group on youth volunteering is being conducted by Phoenix Strategic Perspectives Inc. (Phoenix SPI), a Canadian public opinion research firm, on behalf of the Canada Service Corps (CSC) Program. The CSC is a Government of Canada national youth service program within Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC). The purpose of the online focus group is to collect opinions and feedback from youth that will be used by Canada Service Corps to support youth engagement in community service.

### How will the focus group work?

- Your child is being asked to participate in an online focus group and offer opinions about volunteering and digital learning tools. The discussion will be led by a senior researcher from Phoenix SPI, and it will last up to 90 minutes (1.5 hours). The focus group will include up to 8 participants. Your child will be joined by up to 7 other youth of a similar age.
- The online focus group will be conducted using the Zoom video conferencing platform. No special software is required. Your child will receive an email with their link to join the session a few days prior to the scheduled focus group.
- [FOR 12-14 YEAR OLDS ONLY]: We ask that you, as the responsible adult, be close at hand during the online focus group. You do not need to be in the same room as your child. You just need to be available for the duration of the session in the event your child needs you at some point during the 90-minute focus group.
- Participation in the study is voluntary. Your child has the right not to answer any question that they do not feel comfortable addressing during the focus group. Additionally, your child can change their mind about participating at any time. If your child needs to withdraw participation during the online focus group, they just need to tell the focus group leader and leave the online session by closing their web browser window.

### What about your child's personal information?

- Your child's views, opinions and feedback are their personal information. This personal information will be collected, used, retained and disclosed by Canada Service Corps and ESDC in accordance with the *Privacy Act* and by Phoenix SPI in accordance with the applicable provincial privacy legislation or the *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act*.
- The information your child provides during the focus group will not be linked with their name on any document. When your child logs into the online platform, they will be asked to provide their first name only.
- During the focus group, your child will be asked to introduce themselves to the group using their first name only.
- Officials from Canada Service Corps may observe the online focus groups. They will only be provided the first names of the focus group participants.
- In the final report, no names will be used. Instead, focus group participants may be identified as "a youth from X province or territory" or "a youth participant".

## Qualitative Research with Youth and Youth-serving Organizations - Canada Service Corps

- The session will be video recorded to ensure that participant feedback is captured accurately in the final report. The recordings will be used by Phoenix SPI to write the final report. They will not be shared with any third party, including Canada Service Corps.

### What happens after the focus group?

- Each participant will receive a \$125 honorarium to thank them for their participation.
- The final report written by Phoenix SPI will be provided to Canada Service Corps and will also be available to the public from Library and Archives Canada (<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/>).

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### CONSENT

If you agree to your child's participation in this online focus group and you consent to the video recording of the discussion, we need you to fill out this consent.

**I am signing this Consent Form of my own free will and have a full understanding and comprehension of its terms.**

I, [INSERT NAME OF PARENT/GUARDIAN] \_\_\_\_\_, allow my child, [INSERT NAME OF CHILD] \_\_\_\_\_, to take part in the research study as described above.

- I acknowledge that I have read and understood this Privacy Notice Statement and Consent

**Consent:**

- I consent to the voice and image of my child being recorded.

or

- I do not Consent to the voice and image of my child being recorded.

*Please note if you refuse to provide the acknowledgment and consent by selecting the checkbox above your child will not be able to participate in the focus group and will not be eligible for the honorarium.*

Signature:

Date:

## Background Letters

### Letter sent to organizations requested support with recruitment of CSC participants

October 2024

**Re: Research in Support of the Canada Service Corps**

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Canada Service Corps (CSC) is a national youth service program within Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) that provides contribution funding to third parties to create volunteer service placements for young Canadians across Canada, with specific focus on youth from underserved demographics. Organizations funded to deliver service opportunities offer a diverse array of placements and youth-led projects along themes such as promoting diversity, protecting the environment, reconciliation, strengthening youth resilience, and promoting civic and democratic engagement.

The CSC is working on a new initiative which complements their existing Grants and Contributions programming. This new initiative will deliver programming directly to youth. New supports created under this new initiative aim to increase overall awareness of the program, benefit youth who face barriers to participating in CSC programming and create pathways for program alumni to remain civically engaged. In this way, the programming advances a key program priority around expanding and diversifying the CSC.

ESDC has commissioned an independent Canadian research firm, *Phoenix Strategic Perspectives*, to conduct a research study in support of CSC's new initiative. The purpose of the study is to help build a better understanding of the existing gaps in supporting youth in civic engagement to increase the quality of programming and success of the initiative. The findings will be used to inform a suite of new tools and resources directed at youth that aim to increase youth participation in volunteer service, enrich the service journey, and raise overall awareness of the CSC.

ESDC is asking for your help to promote the research study through your organization's communication channels, such as web and social media sites. Should your organization be able to assist us, you will be provided with promotional text, in a ready to publish digital format. The text will provide information about the research study and direct interested youth to complete a short questionnaire online (hosted by the research firm) to determine their eligibility to participate in the study. Youth who are selected and complete the study will receive an honorarium. Your organization will not be required to collect information from youth. Youth will communicate directly with the research firm should they be selected to participate in the research study.

If you are contacted by a representative from *Phoenix Strategic Perspectives*, we hope you will consider supporting this initiative. If you have any questions about this initiative, please feel free to contact Giselle Geha of the Canada Service Corps at [giselle.geha@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca](mailto:giselle.geha@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca). To speak to a member of the research firm, you may contact Alethea Woods of *Phoenix Strategic Perspectives* by telephone at 613-260-1700, ext. 223 or by email at [awoods@phoenixspi.ca](mailto:awoods@phoenixspi.ca).

On behalf of ESDC, I thank you in advance for your cooperation. We look forward to collaborating with you.

Sincerely,

Kiley Hamilton  
Directrice/Director  
Service jeunesse Canada/Canada Service Corps  
Emploi et Développement social Canada/Employment and Social Development Canada

**Letter sent to organizations with the request for an interview**

January 2025

**Re: Research in Support of the Canada Service Corps**

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Canada Service Corps (CSC) is a national youth service program within Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) that provides contribution funding to third parties to create volunteer service placements for young Canadians across Canada, with specific focus on youth from underserved demographics. Organizations funded to deliver service opportunities offer a diverse array of placements and youth-led projects along themes such as promoting diversity, protecting the environment, reconciliation, strengthening youth resilience, and promoting civic and democratic engagement.

The CSC is working on a new initiative which complements their existing Grants and Contributions programming. This new initiative will deliver programming directly to youth. New supports created under this new initiative aim to increase overall awareness of the program, benefit youth who face barriers to participating in CSC programming and create pathways for program alumni to remain civically engaged. In this way, the programming advances a key program priority around expanding and diversifying the CSC.

ESDC has commissioned an independent Canadian research firm, *Phoenix Strategic Perspectives*, to conduct a research study in support of CSC's new initiative. The purpose of the study is to help build a better understanding of the existing gaps in supporting youth in civic engagement to increase the quality of programming and success of the initiative. The findings will be used to inform the design of a suite of new tools and resources directed at youth that aim to increase youth participation in volunteer service, enrich the service journey, and raise overall awareness of the CSC.

If you are contacted by a representative from *Phoenix Strategic Perspectives*, we hope you will consider supporting this initiative. If you have any questions about this initiative, please feel free to contact Giselle Geha of the Canada Service Corps at [giselle.geha@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca](mailto:giselle.geha@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca). To speak to a member of the research firm, you may contact Alethea Woods of *Phoenix Strategic Perspectives* by telephone at 613-260-1700, ext. 223 or by email at [awoods@phoenixspi.ca](mailto:awoods@phoenixspi.ca).

On behalf of ESDC, I thank you in advance for your cooperation. We look forward to collaborating with you.

Sincerely,

Kiley Hamilton  
Directrice/Director

**Qualitative Research with Youth and Youth-serving Organizations - Canada Service Corps**

Service jeunesse Canada/Canada Service Corps

Emploi et Développement social Canada/Employment and Social Development Canada

## Moderator's Guide – Youth

### Introduction [5 minutes]

→ Introduce moderator/firm and welcome participants to the focus group.

TECHNICAL CHECK; CONFIRM SOUND AND VIDEO QUALITY.

- Thank you for attending.
- We're conducting research on behalf of Employment and Social Development Canada.
- We'll be asking for your opinions on volunteering and civic engagement.
- The discussion will last up to 90 minutes.
- I'd like you to leave your camera on for the duration of the session.

→ Describe focus group.

- This is a “virtual” organized discussion.
- My job is to facilitate the discussion, keeping us on topic and on time.
- Your job is to offer your opinions.
- I'd like to hear from everyone, so we have a range of opinions.
- There are no right or wrong answers and it's okay if you don't all agree.
- Please be considerate and try not to interrupt others.
- Feel free to use the “raise hand” function to let me know that you'd like to say something.

→ Explanations.

- Participation in this focus group is completely voluntary.
- Comments treated in confidence.
  - Anything you say during these groups will be kept anonymous.
  - Our report summarizes the findings but does not mention anyone by name.
  - We encourage you to not provide any identifiable information about yourself.
- The session is being video recorded and transcribed.
  - Recording is for report writing purposes/verify feedback.
  - Recordings remain in our possession and will not be released to anyone.
- There are people involved in this project who will be observing tonight's online session.
  - They're here to listen to you and ensure that all important topics are covered.
  - They may also take their own notes on tonight's session, but these again will not mention anyone by name.

→ As a thank you for your participation today, each of you will receive [insert incentive].

→ Any other questions?

### Impressions of Volunteering [30 minutes]

As I mentioned, tonight we're going to be discussing volunteering and civic engagement. Before we do that, I'd like to start by asking about your impressions of volunteering and, for those who have or are currently volunteering, you may draw on your experience.

1. To start, how many of you have participated in volunteer activities in your community? GET HAND COUNT
2. For those of you who have volunteered, could you tell us briefly about your experience and why you chose this opportunity? If you have more than one volunteer experience, please tell us about your most recent one. PROBE: Current volunteer/former volunteer/repeat volunteer
3. What kinds of volunteer experiences interest you the most? For those who haven't volunteered...think about what might interest you if you were to participate in a volunteer activity. For those of you not currently volunteering, what would it take to get you interested in a new opportunity?
4. Now let's talk about factors that might motivate someone your age to volunteer. What do you think would motivate you to participate in a volunteer activity? And, for those who have volunteer experience, what motivated you to participate? PROBE FOR REASONS WHY: a supportive community, friends, family, teachers/educators, social media, others.
5. What about time commitment... How many hours each week or each month would be reasonable for you to commit to volunteering? Why do you say that? MODERATOR: IF NEEDED, REMIND YOUTH WITH VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE THAT THEY MAY DRAW ON THEIR EXPERIENCE(S) WHEN RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS.
6. How do you think you find out about volunteer opportunities? PROMPT IF NEEDED: websites, social media, personal networks. *If* you were actively looking for a volunteer opportunity, where would you look and why?
  - a. IF NOT OFFERED BY THOSE WHO HAVE VOLUNTEERED: For those of you who have volunteer experience, how did you first hear about the opportunity?

MODERATOR: IF WEBSITES ARE MENTIONED, PROBE FOR SPECIFICS/NAMES OF SITES AND SEARCH CRITERIA.

7. *If* you were to look for volunteer opportunities, what do you think would be your main reason for you getting involved? PROMPT IF NEEDED: mandatory volunteer hours, personal development, experience for your resume, giving back to your community.
8. Can you think of any types of barriers or challenges that might stop you from **starting** a volunteer opportunity? PROMPTS IF NEEDED: Lack of time, not knowing where to begin, fear of commitment... PROBE FOR REASONS WHY.
9. *If* you were to volunteer, what kinds of challenges or barriers, if any, do you think you **would** face? PROBES IF NEEDED: cost, balancing time between school/work/family and volunteering, accessibility.

## Qualitative Research with Youth and Youth-serving Organizations - Canada Service Corps

- a. PROMPT IF NEEDED FOR WHO HAVE VOLUNTEERED: And, for those of you with volunteer experience, did you face any challenges or barriers when volunteering?
10. [SKIP IF NO CHALLENGES OR BARRIERS IDENTIFIED] How do you think these barriers could be addressed to make volunteering more accessible for you?
  11. What skills or personal benefits do you think **you** might gain from volunteering?
    - a. PROMPT IF NEEDED FOR WHO HAVE VOLUNTEERED: For those of you with volunteer experience, what skills or personal benefits did you gain?

### Training [15 minutes]

Still thinking about volunteering,

12. Do you think you're prepared to participate in volunteer activities? And, for those who have experience volunteering, did you feel prepared before you started to volunteer? If not, why not? PROBE FOR REASONS WHY.

MODERATOR: IF NEEDED, REMIND YOUTH WITH VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE THAT THEY MAY DRAW ON THEIR EXPERIENCE(S) WHEN RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS.

Now I'd like to talk about training.

Thinking more broadly now...

13. How many of you have taken some form of training? Let's have a show of hands [COUNT]...What motivates you to participate in training activities or to complete training programs, whether as part of your work or schooling? PROMPTS IF NEEDED: certifications, personal growth, career advancement, they're mandatory.
14. How do you prefer to learn new information? WAIT FOR TOP-OF-MIND FEEDBACK AND THEN ASK: What about [ROTATE ORDER] online or in-person?... short videos? ... interactive tutorials? .... written guides? Why is that?

### Online Resources [15 minutes]

15. Are you aware of any Government of Canada online resources for youth and youth-serving organizations?

NOTE TO MODERATOR: Examples: the CSC website, youth.gc.ca, and Youth Digital Gateway.
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16. For those aware [HAND COUNT], have you used any Government of Canada digital offerings? If yes:
  - a. Which ones?
  - b. What was your experience using these resources? Was it positive or negative and why?

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For everyone...

17. What resources would you like to see in a Government of Canada online platform directed at youth and youth-serving organizations? PROBES: online curriculum, podcasts, etc.
18. What kind of digital tools do you like to use for school or work? Please think broadly here...digital tools refer to platforms and apps, anything from Zoom and WhatsApp to Google Workspace and Dropbox, and more.

### Related Issues [15 minutes]

Changing topics a bit...

19. How many of you think you might volunteer in the future? For those who are volunteering now, will you continue with this organization or another volunteer opportunity? [HAND COUNT] If so, why?
20. Would you ever consider volunteering in an international setting? If so, what interests you about it?
21. Do you think volunteering is valued in your community? Why or why not?
22. Do you think that volunteer opportunities are accessible to you? If not, what could be done to make volunteering more inclusive?
23. What can be done to improve youth engagement in civic activities? Do some causes or issues resonate more with you and/or should be prioritized? If yes, could you tell us what they are?

### Awareness and Impressions of Canada Service Corps [5 minutes]

The last thing I'd like to talk about is the Canada Service Corps.

24. With just a show of hands [HAND COUNT], who had heard of the Canada Service Corps program before being recruited for this focus group?
25. For those aware of the Canada Service Corps, what's your overall impression of the program? Why do you say that?

### Conclusion [5 minutes]

We've covered a lot tonight and I really thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts and opinions today.

26. Does anyone have any last thoughts or feedback to share with the Government of Canada about the topic?

On behalf of the Canada Service Corps program, I would like to thank you for your time and participation today. The recruiter will contact you about the honorarium.

**You can all log out now. Have a great evening!**

## Moderator's Guide – CSC Participants

### Introduction [5 minutes]

→ Introduce moderator/firm and welcome participants to the focus group.

TECHNICAL CHECK; CONFIRM SOUND AND VIDEO QUALITY.

- Thank you for attending.
- We're conducting research on behalf of Employment and Social Development Canada.
- We'll be asking for your opinions on volunteering and civic engagement.
- The discussion will last up to 90 minutes.
- I'd like you to leave your camera on for the duration of the session.

→ Describe focus group.

- This is a "virtual" organized discussion.
- My job is to facilitate the discussion, keeping us on topic and on time.
- Your job is to offer your opinions.
- I'd like to hear from everyone, so we have a range of opinions.
- There are no right or wrong answers and it's okay if you don't all agree.
- Please be considerate and try not to interrupt others.
- Feel free to use the "raise hand" function to let me know that you'd like to say something.

→ Explanations.

- Participation in this focus group is completely voluntary.
- Comments treated in confidence.
  - Anything you say during these groups will be kept anonymous.
  - Our report summarizes the findings but does not mention anyone by name.
  - We encourage you to not provide any identifiable information about yourself.
- The session is being video recorded and transcribed.
  - Recording is for report writing purposes/verify feedback.
  - Recordings remain in our possession and will not be released to anyone.
- There are people involved in this project who will be observing tonight's online session.
  - They're here to listen to you and ensure that all important topics are covered.
  - They may also take their own notes on tonight's session, but these again will not mention anyone by name.

→ As a thank you for your participation today, each of you will receive [insert incentive].

→ Any other questions?

### Experience with service volunteer opportunity [20 minutes]

All of you are here tonight because you took part, or are taking part, in a service volunteer opportunity in made possible, in part, by funding from the Canada Service Corps program. If you are not familiar with the Canada Service Corps, it's a Government of Canada program that funds national and regional organizations to create service placements and micro-grants for youth, such as the one you participated in.

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1. I'd like to start by having everyone introduce themselves and tell us briefly about your service volunteer opportunity. I'm interested in when you participated, the type of project you worked on, and whether you received a micro-grant to lead your own service project.
2. How did you first become aware of the service volunteer opportunity you're take part in now or recently participated in? Did you come across the volunteer opportunity through the Canada Service Corps program? Were you actively looking for information about youth volunteer opportunities? If so, how? PROMPT IF NEEDED: online, networking...

MODERATOR: IF WEBSITES ARE MENTIONED, PROBE FOR SPECIFICS/NAMES OF SITES.

3. Would you say it was easy or hard to find information and resources about this and other volunteer opportunities in your community? What specifically made it easy or hard?
4. Is there a specific reason you were looking for volunteer opportunities? PROMPT IF NEEDED: mandatory volunteer hours, personal development, experience for your resume, giving back to your community....
5. Did you experience any challenges or barriers participating in this volunteer opportunity? If so...
  - a. What type of challenges or barriers? PROBE IF NEEDED: cost, balancing time between school/work/family and volunteering, accessibility.
  - b. How did you address these challenges or barriers?
6. Overall, was your experience positive or negative and why?

### Impressions of Canada Service Corps and Use of Supports [15 minutes]

7. Before participating in your service volunteer opportunity, what, if anything, did you know about the Canada Service Corps?
8. Now having participated in your service volunteer opportunity, what do you know about the Canada Service Corps? Anything else?
9. What's your overall impression of the Canada Service Corps? Why do you say that?
10. Are you aware that you have access to supports and resources provided by the Canada Service Corps program? If yes...
  - a. Have you used any of these supports and resources? If yes, which ones?
  - b. Were these supports and resources valuable? Why do you say that?

MODERATOR: Supports and resources include living expenses, equipment or services that enable virtual service opportunities, mentorship, dependent care, transportation, accommodation, meals, mental health supports, career development supports, specialized services or referrals to appropriate, resources, arrangements or equipment for persons with disabilities, certificates, small tokens of appreciation made available to the primary participant of a service opportunity.

## Qualitative Research with Youth and Youth-serving Organizations - Canada Service Corps

11. For those of you who have other volunteer experiences...let's have a show of hands [COUNT]... How does the Canada Service Corps program compare to other volunteer experiences?
12. How could the Canada Service Corps program better meet your needs and expectations?

### Training [15 minutes]

Still thinking about your Canada Service Corps placement...

13. Did you feel prepared when you began your service placement or micro-grant? If not, why not?
14. Did you have the opportunity to participate in a training or orientation session before starting your placement? If so...
  - a. What type of training did you receive? PROBE: topics covered, method of delivery (in-person vs. online).
15. Are there (FOR THOSE WHO HAD TRAINING: other) areas in which training would have been helpful? If so, what types of learning or training opportunities would you like to see?

Thinking more broadly now...

16. How do you prefer to learn new information? Would you rather have short videos, interactive tutorials, or written guides? Do you prefer online or in-person learning?
17. Are there any new social media trends or features that you think could enhance online training experiences?

### Digital Tools [15 minutes]

18. Are you aware of any Government of Canada digital offerings for youth and youth-serving organizations?

NOTE TO MODERATOR: Examples: the CSC website, youth.gc.ca, and Youth Digital Gateway.
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19. For those aware [HAND COUNT], have you used any Government of Canada digital offerings? If yes, which ones?
  - a. What was your experience using these resources? Was it positive or negative and why?

For everyone...

20. What resources would you like to see in a Government of Canada online platform directed at youth and youth serving organizations? PROBES: space to track hours, podcasts developed by youth to assist in the service journey, curriculum...
21. What kind of digital tools do you like to use in your work or school environment? Please think broadly here...digital tools refer to platforms and apps, anything from Zoom and WhatsApp to Google Workspace and Dropbox, and more.

**Related Issues [15 minutes]**

Changing topics a bit...

22. How many of you will continue or have continued volunteering after the completion of your Canada Service Corps placement? [HAND COUNT] If so, why?
23. Would you ever consider volunteering in an international setting? If so, what interests you about it?
24. Do you think volunteering is valued in your community? Why or why not?
25. What factors encourage you to volunteer? PROBE: a supportive community, friends, family, teachers/educators, social media, others.
26. Do you find that volunteer opportunities are accessible to you? If not, what could be done to make volunteering more inclusive?
27. What can be done to improve youth engagement in civic activities? Do some causes or issues resonate more with you and/or should be prioritized? If yes, could you tell us what they are?

**Conclusion [5 minutes]**

We've covered a lot tonight and I really thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts and opinions today.

28. Does anyone have any last thoughts or feedback to share with the Government of Canada about the topic?

On behalf of the Canada Service Corps program, I would like to thank you for your time and participation today. We will contact you about the honorarium tomorrow.

**You can all log out now. Have a great evening!**

## Interview Guide

### Introduction

- A. Introduce interviewer/research firm.
- B. Thank the individual for agreeing to participate. Remind them of the purpose of the interview:
  - We're conducting these interviews on behalf of Employment and Social Development Canada, or ESDC, in support of a new initiative being introduced by the Canada Service Corps, or CSC.
  - As you may know, the CSC is a national youth service program within ESDC that provides contribution funding to national and regional organizations to create volunteer service placements for young Canadians across Canada.
  - The findings from the interviews will be used to inform the design of new tools and resources directed at youth that aim to increase the participation of youth involved in volunteer service, enrich the service journey, and raise overall awareness of the CSC.
- C. Remind the interviewee that responses are confidential:
  - Your participation is voluntary and will not influence any future interactions you may have with the Government of Canada.
  - Your responses will be kept confidential. The feedback you provide will be used by ESDC for research purposes only and will not be attributed to you personally or your organization in the report resulting from this study.
- D. Request to record interview at this point:
  - With your permission, I'd like to record the interview. The recording is to accurately document the information you provide and will be used to write the report only. It will not be shared with any third party. Do I have your permission to record this interview?
- E. The interview will last up to 45 minutes. Do you have any questions before we begin the interview?

### Background [5 minutes]

To start the interview,

1. Will you please tell me briefly about your organization's main activities and your role at [ORGANIZATION]? [KEEP BRIEF]
2. Before we contacted you about this study, what, if anything, did you know about the Canada Service Corps, or CSC?

**BEFORE CONTINUING WITH THE INTERVIEW, PROVIDE A DESCRIPTION OF THE CSC [ADAPT AS NEEDED BASED ON KNOWLEDGE OF INTERVIEWEE]:**

- The Canada Service Corps is a Government of Canada program that seeks to promote civic engagement among Canadian youth aged 12-30 by creating and facilitating access to volunteer service opportunities.
- By empowering youth to engage in service, the Canada Service Corps aims to support a national movement that encourages youth to give back to their communities.

## Qualitative Research with Youth and Youth-serving Organizations - Canada Service Corps

- The CSC provides funding to organizations to deliver service opportunities. Interested organizations can apply for funding through a Call for Proposals.
3. What's your overall impression of the Canada Service Corps? Why do you say that?
  4. How interested, if at all, would you and your organization be in a program like the Canada Service Corps? Why is that?

### Program(s) offered by the Organization [15 minutes]

5. What type of programs or initiatives does your organization currently offer to promote civic engagement or volunteering opportunities among youth? And just a reminder that "youth" covers young people from ages 12 to 30.
6. What would you say is the main objective of [ADJUST AS NEEDED: these programs / this program]?
7. Which channels do you find are most effective to generate interest in for this type of programming and why? IF NEEDED, PROMPT: social media, website, other organizations, schools, alumni, etc.
8. How do youth become involved in your organization's programs? How do they typically hear about your organization and its youth programming?
9. Does your organization tend to encounter any issues when it comes to recruiting youth participants for your program(s)?

IF YES: What types of issues has your organization encountered, and how does it address them?

10. Does your organization provide any type of training or orientation for youth participants? If so, what does it offer?
11. If your organization had resources to provide [IF YES AT Q10: additional] learning and training opportunities for youth, what would you like to see?

Now I'd like to focus on the youth who participate in your organization's program(s),

12. What is the profile of a typical youth participant of [ADJUST AS NEEDED: these programs / this program]? PROMPT IF NEEDED: what is their age, level of education, gender, etc.? INTERVIEWER: LISTEN FOR DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS NOT IDENTIFIED AND PROBE AS NEEDED.
13. From what you've seen, are youth prepared when they begin a volunteer opportunity with your organization? IF THE ORGANIZATION OFFERS TRAINING OR ORIENTATION BEFORE A VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY, REFRAME THE QUESTION TO FOCUS ON THEIR PERCEPTION OF YOUTH PREPAREDNESS WHEN ATTENDING THE SESSION.

IF NOT: In what areas do youth need training or assistance? Why is that?

### Youth Engagement with Civic Activities [10 minutes]

Based on your experience,

## Qualitative Research with Youth and Youth-serving Organizations - Canada Service Corps

14. What do youth think about being civically involved in their communities? Why do you say that?
15. Do youth typically want to volunteer within their communities, abroad, or both?
16. Are there any challenges and barriers that prevent youth from engaging in civic activities? If so, what type of challenges or barriers?
17. [SKIP IF Q16=NO] How does your organization address these challenges and barriers to participation?
18. What types of supports would have the biggest impact when it comes to mitigating barriers to access for youth?
19. What would motivate a youth to continue volunteering, whether with your organization or with another one?

### Digital Tools, Communication Preferences and Supports [5 minutes]

Now I'd like to briefly discuss tools and resources.

20. Are there any online resources that your organization would benefit from when it comes to supporting program delivery?
21. What types of incentives or recognition could help motivate organizations and youth to engage more with Government of Canada programming like the Canada Service Corps?

### Networking and Funding [5 minutes]

22. Does your organization network or collaborate with other youth-serving organizations in your area?

IF YES:

- a. In what ways? What are the benefits?

23. [SKIP IF Q22=NO] From your networking, are you aware of any common challenges faced by organizations like yours? PROBE: recruitment, funding.

### Final Remarks [5 minutes]

This concludes the formal interview. Typically, we like to reserve a few minutes at the end of each interview for participants to share their closing thoughts.

24. Are there any specific topics or issues you think should be addressed to improve youth engagement in civic activities?

Once again, we would like to thank you for your time.