

Youth Job Connection (YJC) and Youth Job Connection Summer (YJC-S) Program Evaluation

Questions and Answers

April 12, 2018

1. Why is the Ministry conducting the evaluation?

Consistent with the ministry's commitment to evidence-based policymaking, the ministry is conducting an evaluation of the Youth Job Connection (YJC) and Youth Job Connection Summer (YJC-S) programs.

The purpose of this evaluation is to learn about what works well with the program and ways in which the program can be improved.

The evaluation is set to begin in late March 2018.

2. What will the evaluation study?

The evaluation will study the program's design, delivery, and outcomes. The evaluation will proceed in two parts:

- Part one of this evaluation consists of an evaluation that looks at how the program is delivered and some of the outcomes for participants. The purposes are to evaluate:
 - the extent to which, and ways in which, the YJC and YJC-S programs are being delivered across Ontario; and,
 - the extent to which participation in the program contributes to participants achieving intended outcomes.
- Part two of this evaluation is to assess the long-term outcomes of YJC participants only (not YJC-S participants). The study will employ a comparison group design to look at the outcomes of youth who participate in YJC compared against youths of similar profiles enrolled in other Employment Ontario programs (in this case, Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS), and Employment Services (ES)).

3. How is the evaluation being conducted?

The evaluation will draw from multiple lines of evidence and utilize multiple methods of inquiry. Methods include:

- document and literature review;
- administrative data review and analysis;

- key informant interviews and focus groups with ministry staff, service providers and stakeholder groups;
- survey of program participants, employers, and service providers (including caseworkers);
- observation visits to service provider sites; and,
- follow-up with a sample of YJC, ES, and LBS clients over a three-year period.

4. Who is conducting the evaluation?

An independent evaluation group, Social Program Evaluation Group (SPEG) from Ontario's Queen's University, was selected to conduct the evaluation in accordance with the government's procurement guidelines.

5. When will the evaluation take place?

The evaluation is set to begin in March 2018.

Part one of the evaluation is anticipated to conclude by Summer 2018.

Part two of the evaluation is anticipated to conclude by Winter 2020.

6. Who will be involved in the evaluation?

The Ministry's evaluation working group will provide direction to the consultants on the scope of stakeholder consultations. The evaluation working group includes Ministry staff from the program delivery support and regional offices, as well as research, policy, and program design and development areas.

The evaluation is designed to solicit input from all key stakeholders, including participants, employers, and service providers.

7. How will the visits to service provider sites be conducted? What will the consultant do during the site visits?

The evaluation consultants will conduct a minimum of 8 site visits to service providers to understand program activities, program delivery and outcomes in relation to key evaluation questions. The selection of sites to be visited will be balanced across regions and determined in a way to maximize variations in size, geography, rural/urban, and other characteristics.

The site visits will include observations of client intake and referral, service planning and coordination, pre-employment services delivery, and other program-related processes.

The information collected during site visits will be used for the sole purpose of providing input into the program evaluation and will not affect compliance or performance assessment of service providers and their relationship with the Ministry.

8. Will the consultant ensure respondents' confidentiality?

Both the Ministry and the evaluation consultants take participants' confidentiality very seriously. There are protocols in place to ensure that all responses are kept confidential.

Evaluation consultants will not disclose to the ministry the information any one individual or organization may have provided to the evaluation. Discussion of findings will not identify any individuals or organizations by name.

The information provided during this process will be used for the sole purpose of the program evaluation and will not affect compliance or performance assessment of service providers and support organisations and their relationship with the Ministry in the future.

With each data-gathering opportunity, the evaluation consultants will indicate the specific ways in which how the data they collect will be used and what they will do to ensure confidentiality.

9. What frameworks are in place to promote high-quality evaluation?

The evaluation consultants will conduct the evaluation in accordance with acceptable standards of practice. Specifically, they will observe principles of research ethics as outlined in the *Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (2014)*, evaluation standards as provided by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, professional standards of practice as outlined by the Canadian Evaluation Society and relevant privacy frameworks and legislations as required by law.

10. Is my participation required?

Your participation in the YJC evaluation is voluntary. Your participation is important and your input is valued. Your participation enriches the evaluation findings and ensures that findings are comprehensive, representative of the diversity of findings.

11. What does the Ministry intend to do with the results of the evaluation? Will results affect program delivery, funding, contract management?

The evaluation is intended to produce evaluative evidence and lesson-learned to inform continuous program improvement of YJC, including program delivery practice, funding, and contract management.

It is important to note that the evaluation is intended to inform policy/delivery decisions at the aggregate, provincial level. Neither individual nor groups of service providers will be penalized as a consequence of the evaluation. This evaluation is independent of contract management and performance management processes already in place.

12. Will I learn about the results of the evaluation?

The Ministry will provide updates throughout the evaluation process on the *Employment Ontario Partners Gateway* website.

Upon completion of the program evaluation, the Ministry will communicate the findings of the evaluation to service providers and support organisations.

13. How will I know if the Ministry decides to make changes to the YJC program?

The Ministry is committed to continuous improvement of its programs. The evaluation will inform ongoing efforts at improving YJC. The ministry will communicate to stakeholders about all program changes.

As a standard practice, the ministry will continue communicating to stakeholders about changes to YJC through the *Employment Ontario Partners Gateway* website.

14. Will the consultants be providing any accommodation to enable equitable participation?

Yes. In order to accommodate various needs of the respondents, the consultants will offer an option to complete surveys in both official languages as well as in alternate formats (e.g., Braille, online, mail, Skype, TTY, ASL interpreter support) upon request.

Similar accommodations will be offered for the participants of the interviews and discussion groups.

The consultant and the Ministry will cover any expenses associated with the provision of accommodations.

15. Will I get updates about the evaluation?

Yes. The ministry is committed to providing updates on the evaluation. As more information becomes available, the ministry will continue communicating to stakeholders about the evaluation through the Employment Ontario Partners Gateway website.

16. If I have questions, who do I contact?

If you have questions, you may contact your ETC or staff at the regional offices. Alternatively, you may also contact Program Evaluation Coordinator, Chi Yan Lam, at chi.y.lam@ontario.ca.