

**YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS COUNCIL
ADVISORY BODY (YECAB)**

*Taking Action to Support Toronto's
Young Entrepreneurs*



A study conducted by the Young Entrepreneurs Council Advisory Body of the City of Toronto and co-sponsored by the City of Toronto

Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION.....	3
1.1 YECAB Engagement Plan.....	4
1.2: Current City Programs to Support Young Entrepreneurs.....	5
1.3: Alignment with City Strategies and Priorities.....	6
2. KEY THEMES: WHAT THE YECAB SAID ABOUT ENTREPRENEURSHIP	7
2.1 Challenges.....	7
2.2 Opportunities & Solutions.....	10
3. IMPLEMENTING CHANGE: PARTNERSHIPS, PROJECT & POLICIES	12
3.1 Enhancing Partnerships:.....	12
3.2 Projects and Action Items:.....	13
Appendix A – YECAB Members	15
Appendix B – Summary of Workshops	16
Workshop #1: Youth Education & Outreach	16
Workshop #2: Traditional Small Businesses.....	18
Workshop #3: High-Growth Businesses.....	19
Workshop #4: Not-for-Profit/Social Enterprise.....	20

Executive Summary

In 2014, the Deputy Mayor's Young Entrepreneurs Roundtable was convened with the purpose of building a stronger partnership between young entrepreneurs and the City of Toronto. The Young Entrepreneurs Council Advisory Body (YECAB) was established as a result of this process to further the discussion between advisory members and City staff. The YECAB was formed to catalyze and prioritize projects, programs, and policies that the City could undertake to support young entrepreneurs.

YECAB members were comprised of young entrepreneurs representing a range of economic sectors, as well as, various eco-system support organizations. Over the course of 2015, four workshops were held to generate ideas that could help young entrepreneurs start and grow their business in Toronto. The four workshops covered the topics of:

- Youth Entrepreneurship Education and Outreach
- Starting and Growing a Traditional Small Business
- Starting and Growing a Fast-Growth/Venture-Backed Business
- Starting and Growing a Social Enterprise/Not-for-Profit Organization

YECAB members identified a number of challenges and barriers preventing young entrepreneurs from succeeding. The group then worked to develop solutions to support young entrepreneurs in Toronto. The main themes emerging from the YECAB sessions include:

- Leveraging existing programs at the City and in the Toronto eco-system.
- Fostering connections between mentors and young entrepreneurs.
- Facilitating networking opportunities to peers.
- Creating a one-stop online portal for entrepreneurs to learn about resources, programs and funding.
- Supporting greater access to funding and grants for young entrepreneurs.
- Developing a process for the City to become a testing/demonstration site and first purchaser of local innovation.
- Enhancing and increasing access to flexible and affordable space.
- Branding Toronto as an entrepreneurship hub for young entrepreneurs.
- Partnering with Toronto's school boards and post-secondary education institutions to develop and promote entrepreneurship programs.

These themes have a number of actions and projects that have been identified in this report. The projects are aligned to activities in other City Divisions such as Toronto Employment and Social Services, as well, as actions identified in the City's Startup Eco-System Strategy.

Members of the YECAB will be invited to assist in the implementation of these projects as they are activated in 2016 and beyond.

Taking Action to Support Toronto's Young Entrepreneurs

1. INTRODUCTION

Young entrepreneurs doing business in Toronto are integral to ensuring long-term growth, prosperity, and vitality for the City's economy. As a result, the Deputy Mayor's Young Entrepreneurs Roundtable was held on July 16, 2014 to build a stronger partnership with this dynamic subsector. Over thirty young entrepreneurs, along with representatives from entrepreneurship support organizations, participated in the Roundtable. The objectives of the Roundtable were to engage with participants, form partnerships, and set a course to act on issues discussed by proposing meaningful programs, projects and policies that could create an enabling environment for young entrepreneurs to start to grow their business.

The Young Entrepreneurs Council Advisory Body (YECAB) was established as a result of this process to further the discussion between advisory members and the City of Toronto. The YECAB was formed to identify projects, programs, and policies that the City of Toronto could undertake to support young entrepreneurs. While there are many challenges and opportunities to be addressed, the scope of the YECAB was to identify priority actions that the City of Toronto could lead to support young entrepreneurs.

With that scope in mind, the mandate established for the YECAB was to:

- **Build capacity** by identifying ways the City of Toronto and its partners can support youth entrepreneurship and encourage business formation in the City of Toronto.
- **Initiate action** and be a catalyst for new ideas, innovation and excellence to support youth entrepreneurs in the City of Toronto.
- **Facilitate input** between advisory body members, business stakeholders and the City of Toronto regarding youth entrepreneurship issues.
- **Provide advice** to the General Manager of Economic Development & Culture on issues within the Division's area of responsibilities.

YECAB members were comprised of young entrepreneurs representing a range of economic sectors, as well as, various eco-system support organizations. A full list of participating YECAB members can be found in Appendix A.

1.1 YECAB Engagement Plan

Once the YECAB was formed, members held a meeting in September 2014 to develop an engagement plan and to appoint a Chair. Based on the discussions held, YECAB members decided on four specific verticals on which to focus ideation workshops, including:

- **Workshop 1: Youth Entrepreneurship Education and Outreach – December 2014**

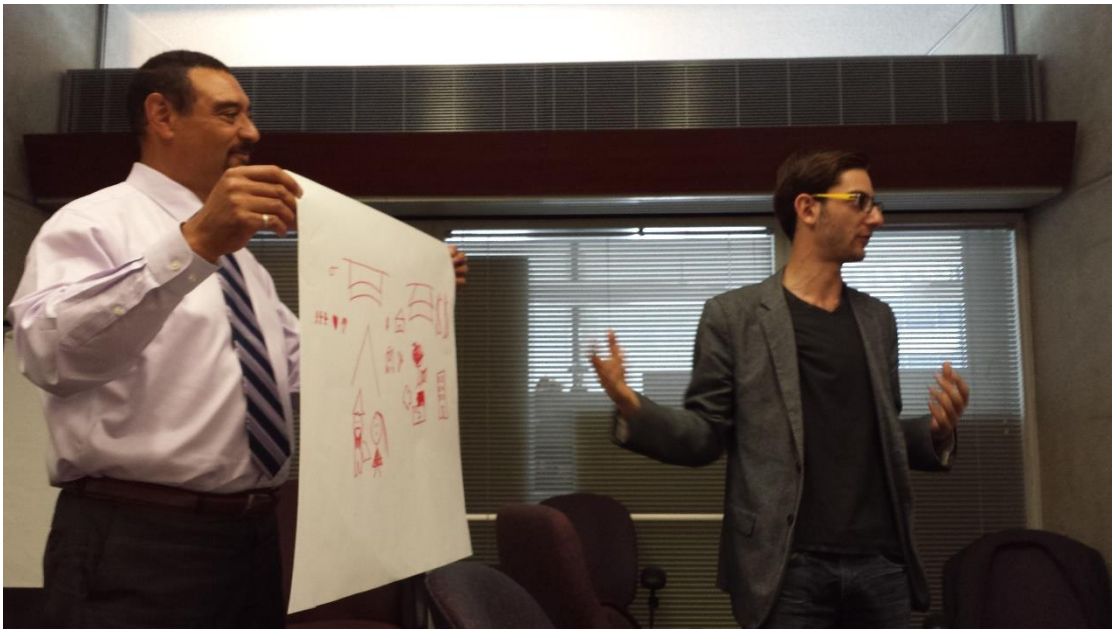
This workshop focused on the engagement of a youth audience at the primary and secondary school levels. The discussion yielded a number of impactful ideas and was guided by the following question: *How can the City of Toronto educate and engage young entrepreneurs?*

- **Workshop 2: Starting and Growing a Traditional Small Business – February 2015**

Toronto is a city made up of neighbourhoods and main streets with many traditional small businesses. The guiding question for this session was: *How can the City of Toronto help young entrepreneurs start and grow a traditional small business?*

- **Workshop 3: Starting and Growing a Fast-Growth/Venture-Backed Business – June 2015**

The emergence of fast-growth businesses have the capacity to generate significant employment and economic value in Toronto. The guiding question for this session was: *How can the City of Toronto help young entrepreneurs start and grow a venture-backed or fast-growth business?*



Workshop #3: Teams presenting their ideas to support fast-growth startups

- **Workshop 4: Starting and Growing a Social Enterprise/Not-for-Profit – August 2015**

The diversity of not-for-profit organizations in Toronto and the social, environmental and economic impacts generated is vital to the wellbeing of the city. This session sought to examine the inter-related issues of the not-for-profit and social enterprise eco-system by asking: *How can the City of Toronto help young entrepreneurs start and grow a social enterprise or not-for-profit organization?*



YECAB members brainstorming ideas

Each session lasted approximately 3 hours and was facilitated by a YECAB member and supported by City of Toronto staff. A list of ideas was generated, many of which have been grouped together into major themes emerging from the workshops. A summary of each session can be found in Appendix B.

1.2: Current City Programs to Support Young Entrepreneurs

The existing programs and supports offered by the City of Toronto were shared with YECAB members at the inaugural meeting and were used as a jumping-off point to discuss other ideas.

Economic Development & Culture (EDC): Entrepreneurship Services

- a. **Enterprise Toronto:** Provides a range of services to startups and existing small businesses. Some of the key programs for young entrepreneurs include:
 - **Starter Company:** A program that provides youth ages 18-29 who are not enrolled in full-time education or returning to school with the opportunity to launch a startup or grow their existing business. The program offers training, advice/mentorship and an opportunity to access up to \$5,000 to support eligible ventures. The current delivery of Starter Company has resulted in 75

businesses being launched and 86 jobs being created. The program is being expanded by Enterprise Toronto to accommodate upwards of 200 more spaces through the end of 2016.

- **Entrepreneur Mentoring Program:** This new program offered by Enterprise Toronto was launched in 2015 and matches new business owners and startup entrepreneurs with experienced peers who can provide guidance, advice and encouragement.
- **Summer Company:** A program for students between the ages of 15-29 planning to return to school who are interested in building their entrepreneurial idea over the course of the summer. Students can apply to receive up to \$3,000 and hands-on business training to launch their business idea.

b. Business Incubation

- The City of Toronto, through the 2015 Council-approved Startup Eco-system Strategy, undertakes a number of projects in collaboration with business incubator/accelerator partners to build a stronger eco-system for entrepreneurship to thrive in Toronto. This Strategy aligns with the ideas and actions emerging from the YECAB workshops.

1.3: Alignment with City Strategies and Priorities

A number of Council-approved strategies and action plans are driving the City's approach to connect, support and serve Toronto's youth in accessing economic opportunities, including entrepreneurship.

- Workforce Development Strategy: focuses on increasing employment opportunities for residents – including youth. It specifically proposes integrated responses and services that benefit both employers and jobseekers.
- Toronto Youth Equity Strategy: identifies key actions to support youth who face multiple barriers to employment. It specifically addresses the need to facilitate entrepreneurship creation as one of many steps to advance youth employment.
- Work-Based Learning Works: An Action Plan for Youth Employment in Toronto: identifies supporting young entrepreneurs as a key action to develop hands-on, work-based learning opportunities for Toronto's younger workforce.

Through these strategies and related actions, Economic Development and Culture (EDC) will continue to build strong interdivisional partnerships with key divisions such as Toronto Employment and Social Services (TESS) and Social Development Finance & Administration (SDFA). These partnerships will help leverage existing resources, ensure better alignment of work and help advance promising approaches to support young entrepreneurs in Toronto.

2. KEY THEMES: WHAT THE YECAB SAID ABOUT ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Across the four workshops, a number of common discussion points and key themes emerged. While each workshop focused on different verticals, YECAB members worked together to build out foundational ideas that could assist young entrepreneurs overall. During each of the workshops, YECAB members were asked to identify issues, barriers and challenges to starting and growing a business, which were then used to identify solutions in the form of projects, programs or policies.

Defining a Young Entrepreneur

As part of the YECAB workshops, it was recognized that many of the programs supporting young entrepreneurs in the eco-system have varying definitions of this demographic. For example, Enterprise Toronto administers Starter Company, which provides grant funding to young entrepreneurs ages 18-29. While Futurpreneur Canada offers financing, mentorship and support tools to young entrepreneurs ages 18-39. One of the important lines of discussion by the YECAB was how to engage younger audiences and shift perceptions around entrepreneurship at an earlier age, therefore, during the ideation process consideration was given to youth as young as 12 and young entrepreneurs to the age of 39.

2.1 Challenges

The top challenges that were identified in all four sessions are as follows:

1. Accessing grants, funding and working capital:

A common thread in all four workshops was the challenge of accessing grants, funding and working capital when young entrepreneurs wanted to start or grow their business. It was also mentioned repeatedly that age criteria on grants are a barrier. For example, funding programs for young entrepreneurs often differ by age as some permit applicants aged 18 to 29 while others have a maximum age limit of 39. Challenges in accessing government grants and funding were of primary importance in the discussion around not-for-profits and social enterprises. Grants were described as scarce and highly competitive.

In addition, access to working capital in order to continue growing and expanding a business was considered a gap in the entrepreneurial eco-system. Some members cited programs such as Summer Company or the Ontario Self-Employment Benefit Program as integral to getting them started.

2. Mentorship and Networks:

The second most often heard challenge across the four workshops was in regards to finding the right mentors or business advisors. YECAB members felt that the Toronto eco-system is home to many experienced entrepreneurs who could offer advice and

open up networks that could assist their business growth. There are a number of experiential learning pieces that young entrepreneurs felt could only come from an experienced mentor or business advisor. However, the challenge therein is gaining access to these connections.

Along a similar line of discussion on finding the right mentor/business advisor, many YECAB members reflected on the challenges of building a network of like-minded peers. While there is a depth of entrepreneurship events in Toronto (everything from conferences to meet-ups), the challenge of building authentic relationships and enabling collaboration was highlighted.

3. Securing stable and affordable space:

Directly related to the issue of securing capital is the issue of space. Given the limited resources that many young entrepreneurs have at the outset, finding space that is affordable and accessible can be a challenge. While Toronto is home to innovation infrastructure such as business incubators, accelerators and co-working spaces that facilitate these needs, some of the feedback from YECAB members were around accessibility and affordability. It was mentioned that some innovation spaces operate on an equity basis, or a membership model that may not end up being affordable for young entrepreneurs just starting out.

In addition, access to equipment and places to prototype or set up production that are affordable and size appropriate were discussed. Many young entrepreneurs in the food and beverage sector, advanced manufacturing and technology hardware sectors mentioned the need to source space to test and prototype, then produce for their first customers.

4. Understanding and navigating the entrepreneurship eco-system:

While Toronto benefits from having a deep concentration of resources, events, programs and organizations that support entrepreneurship across all verticals, the landscape can be confusing to a young entrepreneur looking to start or grow their enterprise. It was mentioned many times that there is no central location for entrepreneurship information in Toronto. If a young entrepreneur was just starting out, knowing where to start is a challenge.

In addition, it was discussed that a lack of definitional clarity on certain sectors, and the unfortunate reality of 'bad information' available in the eco-system can lead young entrepreneurs in the wrong direction when starting-up. This was a particularly important line of discussion during the not-for-profit/social enterprise workshop.

5. Gaining validation:

One of the main topics of discussion across many of the workshops was in regards to the role of the City in supporting startups as they work towards commercialization. In the early stages of starting their business, young entrepreneurs felt that having the support of the City as a testing/demonstration site for their technology/product or service to solve City issues would be valuable validation that would enable their

entry into the market. However, the City currently has no policy framework enabling this type of engagement. Additionally, it was viewed that the current procurement policies and partnership policies at the City are unclear and act as a barrier to commercialization opportunities for small businesses.

6. Knowledge mobilization and knowledge transfer:

Access to critical information that can assist in the development of a business concept/model such as best practices, sector information, market intelligence and demographic data have been viewed as inaccessible and costly. If this information is available at low or no cost, young entrepreneurs are not aware of where and how to find it. Related to this line of discussion is the rigidity of intellectual property policies at the post-secondary level in Toronto. This was viewed as a real barrier to innovation and product development.

7. Reaching youth in Toronto's neighbourhoods:

In a few of the workshops, the discussion around outreach and accessibility of entrepreneurship training and resources were discussed in-depth. YECAB members felt that greater outreach beyond downtown Toronto was required to build a strong culture of entrepreneurship across the city. In addition, much of the innovation infrastructure, such as business incubators, accelerators, co-working spaces and the programming associated with supporting startups is located downtown. Narrowing the geographic disparity between youth populations and entrepreneurship infrastructure in Toronto was identified as important.

8. Toronto's entrepreneurship story:

One of the key gaps identified during the workshops was the need to have a cohesive brand and entrepreneurship story to tell young entrepreneurs locally. One of the lines of discussion was the lack of awareness of success stories and innovations being produced in Toronto. Generating a greater awareness of the entrepreneurial activity and success achieved by traditional small businesses, high-growth startups and not-for-profits and social enterprises in Toronto could work to inspire the next generation of entrepreneurs to start and grow here.

9. Fostering entrepreneurship in youth through educational institutions:

Participants also mentioned a lack of entrepreneurship programming at the elementary and secondary school levels. They stated that entrepreneurial thinking should be fostered at a young age in order to encourage more young people to embark on their own business ventures in the future.

2.2 Opportunities & Solutions

While challenges and barriers were identified, YECAB members countered these issues by proposing a variety of solutions. The themes reflected here are the result of grouping common discussion points across the four workshops.

1. Leverage existing programs at the City and in the Toronto eco-system:

The City of Toronto provides an array of assistance to young entrepreneurs and youth seeking employment opportunities. Generating greater awareness of these programs, as well as, evolving them as the needs of young entrepreneurs change can generate greater opportunities to support youth in becoming entrepreneurs and existing young entrepreneurs as they grow.

The City can also strike greater partnerships with entrepreneurship support organizations who are already delivering programs successfully in Toronto to reduce duplication of efforts. This can increase the reach and impact of the City.

2. Foster connections between mentors and young entrepreneurs:

Connecting experienced mentors to young entrepreneurs in specific verticals through both formal and informal channels was identified as a significant area of potential. The City has launched a mentorship program through Enterprise Toronto, which can be promoted broadly to the eco-system. The City can also look into the Toronto eco-system and identify specific events and forums where mentorship is occurring and support those initiatives, as well as, certain sectors where mentorship is lacking and try to foster connections. The YECAB members identified that developing a program that is not too structured, is authentic and won't burn out mentors can be an effective approach.

3. Facilitate networking opportunities to peers:

Events for young entrepreneurs was discussed across each workshop as a potential way to enhance collaboration in the eco-system. While there are many events already in Toronto, some specific events that encourage youth (primary and secondary school students) to embrace entrepreneurship were discussed. Additionally, adding young entrepreneur/youth components to existing events was identified as ways to build more of an inclusive entrepreneurial community.

4. Create a one-stop online portal for entrepreneurs to learn about resources, programs and funding:

An entrepreneurship online portal was suggested throughout the workshops as a place for young entrepreneurs to access the information required to start and grow their business. The portal could offer information on events, funding sources, resources and programs, as well as, news and success stories in Toronto.

5. Support greater access to funding and grants for young entrepreneurs:

Access to funding and capital was a significant challenge identified by the YECAB. While the City of Toronto is limited in its ability to provide grants directly to

entrepreneurs, a supporting role can be taken to build relationships with other levels of government to address this key issue. In addition, relationships with investors and venture capital networks can be pursued to build greater awareness of the needs of young entrepreneurs and the success stories from within our local eco-system that have investment potential.

6. Develop a process for the City to become a testing/demonstration site and first purchaser of local innovation:

YECAB members felt that the City has a strong role to play in assisting businesses test/demonstrate and commercialize new technologies, services or products that are developed locally. An innovation procurement policy implemented by the City of Toronto to support this type of testing and commercializing within City operations and to solve community issues was a main topic of discussion across all workshops.

7. Enhance and increase access to flexible and affordable space:

Utilizing public spaces and buildings (i.e. civic centres, Toronto Public Library locations and other City infrastructure) to provide young entrepreneurs with low cost, or no-cost temporary office and meeting spaces were identified as critical. An example provided by YECAB members could be promoting commercial kitchens that are available off-peak and after-hours at an affordable rate.

One of the big ideas emerging from YECAB sessions included launching a “Startup City Pass”, where the network of spaces and places across the City could be accessed by young entrepreneurs. This City Pass can also grant access to transportation options to enable mobility of young entrepreneurs across the City.

8. Brand Toronto as an entrepreneurship hub for young entrepreneurs:

One of the main topics of discussion was how the City of Toronto brands Toronto as a place to do business. Showcasing success stories and building a strong brand based on the advantages that Toronto has to offer was identified as a solution to fostering an enhanced culture of entrepreneurship.

9. Partner with Toronto’s School Boards and Post-Secondary Education Institutions to develop and promote entrepreneurship programs:

YECAB members felt strongly that one of the key ways to build entrepreneurial capacity is to do so at a young age. Developing programs and infrastructure for students starting in primary school and building into post-secondary education can provide a solid foundation for young entrepreneurs. Building both skills and the mindset/attitude was emphasized as key.

3. IMPLEMENTING CHANGE: PARTNERSHIPS, PROJECT & POLICIES

The four workshops generated a list of opportunities to support young entrepreneurs in Toronto. A number of partnerships, projects and policies are outlined in this section, which can be implemented to affect change.

3.1 Enhancing Partnerships:

The City can identify organizations and eco-system partners who are implementing projects and programs that are successfully supporting young entrepreneurs and amplify the reach and impact through collaboration and funding.

Partner	Action(s)
City of Toronto - Toronto Employment and Social Services Division (TESS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrepreneurship Services (ES) will participate in the City of Toronto's Youth Employment Advisory Committee to support the successful implementation of recommendations in <i>Work-Based Learning Works: An Action Plan for Youth Employment in Toronto</i> • ES will continue to work with TESS to increase access for youth in receipt of Ontario Works and youth living in Neighbourhood Improvement Areas to entrepreneurship programming, including the repurposing of an existing TESS Employment Centre. The centre will be the City's first integrated employment and entrepreneurship site. More specifically, EDC will deliver its Starter Company Program from this site. • ES will continue to promote the existing Enterprise Toronto Entrepreneur Mentoring Program to residents in receipt of Ontario Works – including youth - participating in TESS' Purchased Self Employment Development (SED) programs. • TESS and ES will continue to identify priority projects to partner on in the medium to long-term.
City of Toronto - Social Development Finance and Administration Division (SDFA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support youth development initiatives and the implementation of the Youth Equity Strategy as it pertains to entrepreneurship.
Toronto Youth Cabinet (TYC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support policy initiatives and facilitate youth outreach through the TYC.
Toronto District School Board (TDSB) / Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a relationship with school boards in Toronto to deliver entrepreneurship training and capacity building. Build a bridge between existing programs in the eco-system being delivered by organizations including business incubators and accelerators.

Province of Ontario	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to build on the relationship with the Province of Ontario on key issues (youth entrepreneurship funding, grants for not-for-profit organizations and social enterprises, etc.).
---------------------	--

3.2 Projects and Action Items:

To implement certain projects and actions, the City may establish task-oriented project teams based on short (2016) and medium-term (2017-2018) timeframes. Many of the ideas generated by YECAB were aligned to actions contained in *From Concept to Commercialization: A Startup Eco-system Strategy for the City of Toronto*. YECAB members will be invited to participate in these projects to ensure a young entrepreneur lens is applied.

Project/Action	Description	Timeline/Progress
1. Innovation Procurement Policy	This project will focus on the development of a corporate policy that will allow the City to become a first purchaser of innovation and become a testing and demonstration site for local businesses.	Medium-Term
2. Entrepreneur Mentoring	This project will focus on promoting the existing Enterprise Toronto Entrepreneur Mentoring Program to an audience of young entrepreneurs.	Ongoing
3. Startup Festival	Launch a Startup Festival that showcases Toronto's innovative small business community (e.g.: It could be the Nuit Blanche for Startups).	Short-Term
4. Space for Young Entrepreneurs	This project will focus on unlocking civic spaces (i.e.: civic centres) for the use of entrepreneurs. An initial focus will be on Enterprise Toronto's North York Civic Centre location.	Short-Term
5. Startup City Pass	This project will focus on developing the framework for "Startup City Pass". This program will consolidate a network of innovation space across the City	Medium-Term

	and make it accessible and affordable to young entrepreneurs.	
6. Startup Eco-system Branding	Celebrate the Toronto story and its strength of the startup eco-system by developing and communicating a strong brand.	Short-Term
7. Startup Eco-system Portal	Work in partnership to develop a portal that acts as the central repository of information for startup and small business activity in Toronto.	Short-Term
8. Youth Entrepreneurship Education/Boot Camps/Training	Partner with business incubators and the school boards in Toronto to showcase programming and startup success stories to high school students.	Short-Term, ongoing
9. Leveraging Existing Entrepreneurship Events	Work to identify existing events where a youth component can be built in or supported (e.g.: Startup Open House, Small Business Forum, Startup Weekend – youth edition).	Ongoing
10. Put Funding into the Toronto Eco-system	Develop and implement a Business Incubator and Accelerator Grant Fund to support the programming and special projects of business incubators and accelerators.	Short-Term

Appendix A – YECAB Members

Name	Title	Organization/Company
Shaharris Beh	Founder	Hackernest
Kaela Bree	Co-Founder & Chief Executive Officer	X Movement (Aussie X)
Andrew Bromfield	President & Chief Technology Officer	Formative Innovations Inc.
Chloe-Marie Brown	Team Lead, Policy Development	Toronto Youth Cabinet
Jory Cohen	Managing Director	Youth Social Innovation Capital Fund
Dimitri Colomvakos	CTO and CO-Founder	Demac Media
Ann Lockhart, Michael Scotland and Kate Blackport	--	ACCESS Community Capital Fund
Andrew Louis	Co-Founder & Chief Technology Officer	ShopLocket
Tom Manimanakis	Managing Director	Ethos Assets
Gerard Meade	--	Black Youth Jobs
Mirna Mortada, Faisal Al-Tameemi	Co-Founders	Pixel + People
Peter Mugridge	Vice President, Incubation and Programs	Toronto Business Development Centre
Ian Nichol	Founder	Mygolio
Jennifer Posthumus	Manager, Program Support	Toronto Employment and Social Services
Mary Baratta	Director	Toronto Employment and Social Services
Cory Rosenfield	Co-Founder	Qoints
Irsida Sheshi	Founder	Green Consciousness Movement
Trevor Twells	Founder	World Social
Amy Weinreib	Associate, Entrepreneurship Programs	MaRS Discovery District

Appendix B – Summary of Workshops

Workshop #1: Youth Education & Outreach

This interactive workshop was focused on ways in which the City of Toronto could enhance youth education and outreach on the topic of entrepreneurship. One of the key issues identified was the need to communicate the opportunity of entrepreneurship to youth at a young age. Also, to embed entrepreneurial thinking and skill sets into early education.

To generate recommendations on what the City could do to support young entrepreneurs and bridge the gap between classroom and business formation, two exercises were undertaken.

The first exercise focused on what should be communicated to young entrepreneurs. This prompt was meant to generate discussion and potential project ideas around how to engage young people to think about entrepreneurship as a viable career path.

What should we be telling young people about Entrepreneurship?

Some of the top responses included:

- Ask questions.
- Sharing real stories and having honest conversations about entrepreneurship successes and failures through a video series, or through the high schools. As a young entrepreneur, being uncomfortable and learning to take risks is an important set of characteristics to develop and embrace.
- Create a network of peers and build relationships.
- Learn to test and sell a concept quickly.
- Entrepreneurship happens across many sectors, not just technology; look to fill the gaps and create opportunities in other sectors.
- Basic education is important; the ability to write, communicate and do math are vital.

Project Ideation – What can the City of Toronto do to engage and educate young people about entrepreneurship?

The discussion around what to communicate to young people about entrepreneurship progressed into project ideas that are summarized by theme below:

a. Communications/Outreach:

It was recognized by the group that Toronto is home to some amazing young entrepreneurs and success stories. This should be leveraged and a branded to celebrate the Toronto story locally and globally.

YECAB members felt that Toronto was rich in support organizations and programs that can help an entrepreneur start and grow; however, the issue highlighted was the lack of a central repository for this information. The difficulty in navigating the entrepreneurial eco-system could be seen as a hindrance. Therefore, the group put forward the idea for the City to harness the resources available and create a one-stop location online for entrepreneurs.

Lastly, it was discussed that broader engagement with the Toronto school boards are necessary, to emphasize entrepreneurship as a viable career path.

b. Events:

YECAB members brainstormed launching an event where young people can experience a “day in the life” of an entrepreneur and visit various startup offices and business incubators across the city and participate in actual incubator workshops. The group felt that existing events, such as Startup Open House or Startup Weekend, could be leveraged. New events could also be considered with support from eco-system partners, such as ‘dine-arounds’, where experienced entrepreneurs would be available for dinners at different restaurants in Toronto and youth could meet with them in an informal, authentic environment.

The other event that the group felt strongly about launching was a boot camp for young entrepreneurs. The purpose of the boot camp is dual, to emphasize entrepreneurial thinking in youth and to start to build the skill sets required to become an entrepreneur (e.g.: sales and communications skills).

c. Policy:

An important area of policy that was discussed by the group was around the City’s procurement policy. Many young entrepreneurs felt that the City could implement a policy framework that enabled startups to test/demonstrate their product/service/technology, or have the City as a first-purchaser to gain traction and validation as their product/service/technology goes to market. It was also discussed that providing a view into the needs of the City can enable startups to solve some civic issues through their innovation.

d. Existing Programming:

On the topic of the dense business support eco-system in Toronto, YECAB members felt that it was important that the City examine opportunities to leverage exiting programming. This includes Enterprise Toronto and Toronto Employment and Social Services programs that can be cross-promoted to youth across Toronto.

Mentorship was a significant area of discussion where many YECAB members felt was lacking. Fostering connections and networks between young entrepreneurs and successful and mature entrepreneurs was discussed as a high priority.

The City was also viewed as being a connector of entrepreneurs to enterprise level/large businesses as well.

e. Space for Young Entrepreneurs:

Finding affordable office space in Toronto was identified as a key issue. Creating space for young entrepreneurs, by utilizing public buildings/civic spaces as temporary offices at either no cost, or a very low cost was of interest. Many YECAB members felt that there are underutilized spaces that can be transformed and used by young entrepreneurs trying to get their business off the ground.

The group took this one step further and talked about the existing network of incubators/accelerators/co-working spaces and transportation between them all in Toronto. The idea of a “Startup City Pass” was discussed, where entrepreneurs can gain access to a network of space and transit in Toronto when they are in their early-stages.

Workshop #2: Traditional Small Businesses

This workshop was focused on enabling young entrepreneurs to start and grow a traditional small business. The session began with a discussion that looked to define and frame what a traditional small business is in Toronto. There was a general agreement around the definition put forward by the City of Toronto's Startup Eco-system Strategy, with some feedback and additions on other facets of traditional small business that ought to be considered.

- "Traditional small businesses are those that may have a scalable business model, but a slower growth trajectory, and may range from manufacturers and distributors, to main street retail, personal services or home-based businesses. In particular, traditional main street businesses play a vital role in building resilient neighbourhoods as they are usually locally owned and directly invested in the neighbourhood". – *City of Toronto, Startup Eco-system Strategy*

The YECAB members felt that this definition needed to be broadened to include home-based businesses and professional/business services.

The group then created a list of organizations that helped them start their business. Some of the organizations discussed included:

- Mindshift and Meet-ups: Networking groups
- Ontario Self Employment Benefit program
- University Alumni Associations (before campus-linked accelerators existed)
- Summer Company
- Sprouter: Valuable information on how to pitch

Workshop Exercises: Brainstorming & Project Ideation

This workshop asked the group to identify issues and challenges that face young entrepreneurs when looking to startup and grow a traditional small business. The intent was to generate a list of barriers and challenges that solutions could be created for through City programs/policies/projects.

Barrier/Challenge	Idea/Solution
Difficulty in connecting with successful entrepreneurs in Toronto.	Mentorship: Develop a program that is not too structured, is authentic and won't burn out mentors. This could be through the development of an app that matches mentors to mentees; or launch a group mentorship program rather than the one-on-one approach.
Access to affordable space (i.e.: kitchens, manufacturing space, office space, etc.)	Create a network of existing affordable spaces for testing/prototyping and early-stage commercialization by sector. An example could be promoting commercial kitchens that are available off-peak and after-hours at an affordable rate.
A lack of resources/credit rating and access to working capital.	Promote startup grants that are offered through the City and other organizations such as Futurpreneur.

<p>Programming at the high school and post-secondary level to foster entrepreneurial thinking and skills.</p>	<p>Build the skills of young people through events/programs such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boot camps: Give young people a firm grasp on what it means to run a traditional small business. • Specific training/courses on starting and growing traditional small businesses delivered by actual entrepreneurs. • Create job placement/training opportunities for young people in traditional small businesses. • Leverage and promote campus-linked accelerator programs.
<p>Difficulty in finding information on business support organizations and programs.</p> <p>Difficulty in gaining access to information on customers and market intelligence (often expensive to get data).</p>	<p>Launch a one-stop location for entrepreneur resources and news (web portal), and ensure there is a youth component and the ability for young entrepreneurs to access the types of information that will help them start and grow.</p> <p>The City could also convene organizations delivering entrepreneurship education and continue the discussion on how young entrepreneurs are supported as they establish traditional small businesses.</p>
<p>The difficulty of building a network of peers and like-minded support in a youth setting</p>	<p>Plan and "Open House Day" where young people can visit real traditional small businesses and spend a day learning how it operates.</p>

Workshop #3: High-Growth Businesses

The exercise was designed by a YECAB member who uses the design thinking methodology with their clients to unearth solutions to problems. During this exercise, participants were paired up and were asked to interview their partner on a range of topics to gain an understanding of some of their unique challenges as young entrepreneurs. The results from the discussion were a set of common challenges and solutions, which have been summarized below.

Most Recent Challenges:

- Raising seed funding/access to capital
- Introductions to the right key person
 - Currently it is viewed as a challenge to find the right business guidance from the right person. The perception of there being a lot of 'inside connections' in the eco-system and the barriers facing young entrepreneurs in accessing these networks.
 - Types of guidance that would be helpful to young entrepreneurs would include how to control a large burn rate and how to focus when launching a startup.
- Access to space at a low cost: Without having to commit to a membership or having to trade equity in exchange for space.
- Access to equipment and access to affordable manufacturing.

- Rigid Intellectual Property policies at the post-secondary level viewed as a hindrance to innovation.
- While Toronto has a depth of talent, it can often be difficult to find the right mix of people with whom to build a team.

What matters most to growing their business?

- Access to capital and resources for prototyping.
- Mentorship: Access to vertically specific advisors and coaches.
- Assistance with focusing on a targeted market.
- Affordable and flexible work space availability.
- The ability to run pilots for validation; the City could be a great partner for this.
- Networking

Identified Solutions

There were a number of ideas discussed during the session, however, these four areas were where the group spent the most time building out:

1. Access to advisors/mentors

- The City can work to build an accessible mentor network that addresses specific business growth needs for startups.

2. Increasing access to resources and capital

- The challenge of funding is not unique to startups in Toronto. YECAB members discussed ways in which the City can help rally some resources into the eco-system, be it through incubators/accelerators, or promoting the eco-system to external Venture Capital networks to bring funding into the pipeline in Toronto.

3. Affordable and Accessible Space:

- A potential resource that could be made available is a listing of space that can be accessed by a young entrepreneur. The spaces don't necessarily have to be traditional in nature (co-working, hot desks, etc.), but spaces in civic buildings and institutions, or public spaces that can be accessed. In addition, a resource on where equipment, prototyping and manufacturing can occur would be helpful to getting a product to market.

4. Talent:

- The City can work with campus-linked accelerators and post-secondary institutions to build a talent/workforce network that can create channels for startups to access the required talent to build the right team and keep their operations in Toronto.

Workshop #4: Not-for-Profit/Social Enterprise

This workshop was focused on how the City can assist young entrepreneurs in starting and growing either a not-for-profit organization or a social enterprise. The session drew upon the experiences of young entrepreneurs and support organizations specifically working in this space. The session started off by setting some parameters around the definition of a not-for-profit organization and a social enterprise. Unfortunately, the lack of definitional clarity became an identified barrier to address. YECAB members decided to ideate around some of the perceived weaknesses and opportunities to generate some project/program/policy ideas.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

Strengths:

- Growing demand to start and grow a not-for-profit/social enterprise
- A huge network of organization that are doing great things for social enterprise

Weaknesses:

- A lack of clarity in the sector, meaning that there is no cohesion in the definition of the sector, or of what a social enterprise is. Also, defining the eco-system for this sector needs to be done.
- A lot of the grants that are applicable or available are for candidates under the age of 29, which does not match who is starting not-for-profit organizations and social enterprises in Toronto. Some of the most successful organizations/enterprises are operated by those around the age of 35.
- Finding a mentor is a key issue for many young entrepreneurs looking to start a not-for-profit organization of a cause-driven social enterprise.
- There is a lack of diversity and lack of accessibility to existing innovation infrastructure. Much of the infrastructure (incubator, accelerators, co-working spaces) are located in the downtown core and cannot be reached by underserved populations. In addition, campus-linked accelerators are perceived to be out of reach to many young people who could benefit from their programs/services.

Opportunities:

- There are a number of strategies and programs in existence that can be leveraged. For example, the Government of Ontario Office of Social Enterprise and at the local level, Toronto Employment and Social Services (TESS) Youth Employment Action Plan.
- As this is an important issue to the sustainability of the economy, political will and influence can be leveraged to move strategic projects.
- Educating the public on what not-for-profit organizations are and what social enterprises are, as well as their impact and outcomes, can encourage greater participation and funding.

Threats:

- "Grant seeking behaviour" rather than capacity building / teaching self-sufficiency.
- While there is a lot of information out there; there is some bad information that can be misleading; the need for an authoritative source on the sector.
- Operating an organization/social enterprise in Toronto can be costly and there are limited resources (grants, etc.) to offset these costs.
- Cost of living in Toronto impacts the ability of young entrepreneurs to succeed (cost of transportation, affordability of office space, affordability of housing).

How can the City support young entrepreneurs in starting and growing a not-for-profit organization or a social enterprise?

- Leverage support from the Province:
 - Turn internships into apprenticeships
 - Funding available from the Province for apprenticeships, but limited to trades. The group wondered how this could be applied to other sectors.
 - Communicate the need to the Province for youth grant funds that are currently capped at 29 to be extended to 39.

- Accessibility of Infrastructure:
 - Look into spreading programs and innovation infrastructure into Toronto's neighbourhoods.
 - Develop an online hub of information (portal).
- Capacity Building/Best Practices/Knowledge Mobilization/Transfer:
 - Develop a "Term of Reference" that will include what are the granting terms commonly used.
 - A question and answer hub (speakers corner for entrepreneurs social), or a "Wiki" as the same questions keep getting asked (definitions as to what a not-for-profit or social enterprise is).
- Funding Pipeline:
 - Financial support for intermediaries that lend to charities/not-for-profits
- Creating Pilots:
 - What are the top issues the City is facing and bring young people together (in the social enterprise space) and host a hackathon or civic challenge.
- Support for Experiences:
 - Create "zones for experimenting" – laneways and pop-up shops; activate under-utilized spaces to assist young entrepreneurs.
- Events:
 - Social innovation hackathon
- Networks/Mentorship:
 - Connect youth to high decision makers
 - Mentorship:
 - Apply the 1000 coffees model
- Outreach:
 - How to engage underserved communities
 - Example: Getting girls into STEM programs and bringing entrepreneurship programs to the most vulnerable communities.
 - bring programs to most vulnerable communities
 - The City can look at what is working and seek to extend the impact and reach of these programs. The City could contact existing youth entrepreneurship programs to do focus groups and ask what has worked, what are the challenges.

Quick Wins and First Priorities:

- Enhance Networks:
 - Bring the eco-system together (virtually or in person) – through an online portal.
- Events:
 - Entrepreneurship Festival
 - Youth Small Business Forum, delivered by Enterprise Toronto
- Funding:
 - Put funding into the hands of entrepreneurs through intermediaries.
- Space:
 - Create access to more affordable space.
- Capacity Building:
 - Develop a not-for-profit sector asset map or "Wiki's".
- Leverage Existing Programs:
 - TESS's Youth Employment Action Plan as a catalyst.
- Branding:
 - Tell the world the entrepreneurship success stories coming out of Toronto.