

Update on Reducing Barriers to Youth Employment and the Diversity Youth Fellowship Program

Date: May 26, 2026

To: Economic and Community Development Committee

From: Executive Director, Social Development

Wards: All

SUMMARY

This report provides an update on the implementation of City Council direction for [Item EC25.7 – Reducing Barriers to Youth Employment](#), including actions to address barriers to youth employment and an assessment of the feasibility of expanding the Diversity Youth Fellowship Program to include a cohort for youth with disabilities.

Youth unemployment in Toronto remains a significant challenge, particularly for equity-deserving youth who continue to face systemic barriers to employment. In April 2026, the unemployment rate for youth aged 15 to 24 in Toronto was 16.8 percent, nearly double the rate for adults aged 35 to 44, and significantly higher than the pre-pandemic youth unemployment rate of 9.8 percent in April 2019.¹

The City is the largest employer of youth, aged 15 to 29, per capita than any other Canadian municipality. As highlighted in staff report EC25.7, more than 16,000 youth are employed across the City system each year. Building on this strong foundation, the City is advancing a more coordinated and equity focused approach to youth employment by strengthening partnerships, expanding workforce development opportunities, and creating clearer pathways from skills development to meaningful, long-term careers. These efforts align with City Council direction for item [EC27.3, City of Toronto's Inclusive Economic Development Framework](#) and its two core pathways: Inclusive Employment and Sector Pathways, and Inclusive Entrepreneurship and Ownership.

Key actions highlighted in this report include:

- The establishment of the Youth Employment Table, co-chaired by the City and United Way Greater Toronto, which has supported the identification of a projected 2,800 new youth employment, training, entrepreneurship, and workforce development opportunities across the City and Table partners.

¹ Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, 3-month moving average, not seasonally adjusted, April 2026

- Improved workforce navigation supports for youth, including a dedicated youth employment website and chatbot in collaboration with Findhelp 211, United Way Greater Toronto, and The Neighbourhood Group.
- The delivery of 11 career activation and job fair events between January and May 2026, that engaged 1,085 youth and provided 250 job opportunities and employment and pre-employment supports to 180 youth.
- Progress on workforce development initiatives that connect youth, particularly from Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving communities to opportunities on major-city building initiatives and large-scale events, such as the FIFA World Cup 2026™, CityServe summer expansion, Community Youth Academy, and the 2026 Municipal Elections.
- Continued development of the Diversity Youth Fellowship Program, which supports pathways into public service and civic leadership for equity-deserving youth through paid placements in Council Members' offices, including exploration of accessibility enhancements and a potential disability-focused cohort.

This report introduces a Youth Employment Pathways framework to support a more coordinated approach to youth employment and workforce development across City initiatives. In addition, the report outlines initial accessibility and program design considerations related to a potential disability-focused cohort within the Diversity Youth Fellowship Program, as well as next steps for engagement with accessibility advocates, community partners, and youth with lived experience.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Director, Social Development recommends that:

1. The Economic and Community Development Committee receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial implications resulting from the adoption of the recommendation in this report.

While the report identifies the need for additional analysis to assess costs, operational implications, and delivery approaches for expanding the Diversity Youth Fellowship Program to include a cohort focused on persons with disabilities, strengthening accessibility within the existing program model has been identified as a more feasible approach at this time.

Any financial impacts arising from enhancements to, or the expansion of, youth employment initiatives or from the continued development of the Diversity Youth Fellowship Program will be submitted through future budget processes for

the relevant City divisions or agencies, as required, for consideration along with other City priorities, subject to the City's financial and resource capacity.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the information as presented in the Financial Impact Section.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on May 20 and 21, 2026, City Council adopted Item EX31.1 Expanding Youth Programs to Create Safer and Stronger Communities, directing staff to expand CityServe with an 8-week paid summer training and development opportunity for 100 youth. Staff were also directed to develop and implement a plan to capitalize on new federal investments in skilled trades through Team Canada Strong and the Build Canada Apprenticeship Service.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2026.EX31.1>

At its meeting on December 16 and 17, 2025, City Council adopted Item EC25.7 – Reducing Barriers to Youth Employment, directing staff to establish and report on the Youth Employment Table, enhance youth-specific data collection, advance construction workforce pathways, and undertake intergovernmental advocacy related to youth employment. <https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2025.EC25.7>

At its meeting on December 16 and 17, 2025, City Council adopted Item EC25.13 – Expanding the Diversity Youth Fellowship Program, directing staff to assess the feasibility of expanding the program, including considerations related to accessibility and program structure. <https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2025.EC25.13>

At its September 16, 2025 meeting, the Economic and Community Development Committee adopted EC23.2 – Welcome Policy Program Access: Update, which outlined improvements to program accessibility for low-income residents, including youth, to enhance equitable participation in City recreation programs. These improvements support broader goals of economic inclusion, youth engagement, and the removal of cost-related barriers to employment and skills development.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2025.EC23.2>

At its July 24, 2025 meeting, City Council adopted MM32.36 – CityServe: A Youth Based Community Service Initiative, directing the Executive Director, Social Development, in partnership with relevant divisions and community partners, to develop and implement a pilot youth-based community service initiative focused on civic engagement, skills development, mentorship, and community service opportunities for Toronto youth.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2025.MM32.36>

At its February 26, 2025 meeting, the Economic and Community Development Committee adopted EC18.6 – Investing In Youth, Empowering Our City's Potential: Creation of a Toronto Youth Employment Program, referred to the Executive Director, Social Development, to create an inventory of existing City of Toronto youth

employment programs, identify opportunities for new or expanded programs, and align youth employment definitions, objectives, and targets.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2025.EC18.6>

At its December 17, 2024 meeting, City Council adopted EC17.2 – A Partnered Approach to Inclusive Economic Development, which includes a definition and guiding principles of Inclusive Economic Development and requests City divisions and agencies to apply these in the development and implementation of relevant plans, strategies, and programs related to employment and entrepreneurship in Toronto.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2024.EC17.2>

At its November 13, 2024 meeting, City Council adopted EC.16.2 Sidewalks to Skylines: A 10-Year Action Plan for Toronto's Economy (2025-2030), which set out a vision for inclusive economic growth, workforce development, and opportunity creation across sectors. Specifically, Action 16 of the Action Plan for Toronto's Economy directs the City to work with local partners and the private sector to expand employment, skills development, and professional development opportunities for Toronto youth, with a focus on Indigenous, Black, and equity-deserving communities.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2024.EC16.2>

More recently, at its May 5, 2026 meeting, the Economic and Community Development Committee considered EC28.1, Sidewalks to Skylines: A 10-Year Action Plan for Toronto's Economy (2025–2035) – Update on Implementation, which provided a first-year implementation update on the Action Plan and introduced additional actions related to Inclusive Economic Development. The report reinforced the City's focus on inclusive employment, workforce development, entrepreneurship, and coordinated economic participation initiatives across divisions and partners, including efforts that support youth employment and economic inclusion.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2026.EC28.1>

At its June 8 and 9, 2021 meeting, City Council adopted the 2019–2022 Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy Action Plan Status Update, which reaffirmed equitable access to employment, training, and workforce pathways as key mechanisms for reducing poverty and improving long-term economic mobility.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2021.EX24.8>

At its December 5, 2017 meeting City Council adopted the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism, which commits the City to dismantling systemic barriers in hiring, retention, and promotion, including for Black youth and early-career Black professionals.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2021.QS3.3>

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

This report is grounded in the City's commitments under the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism, the Poverty Reduction Strategy, and the Toronto Newcomer Strategy. This report advances work that supports improved access to employment opportunities for youth, particularly those facing systemic barriers, including Indigenous, Black, newcomer, 2SLGBTQ+, and other equity-deserving youth.

The cross-sectoral coordinated approach outlined in this report works to strengthen pathways into employment, improve access to opportunities, and support more equitable outcomes.

In addition, this work is informed by the City's commitments to reconciliation with Indigenous communities and to advancing equity for gender-diverse youth. It recognizes the distinct rights, experiences, and needs of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis youth, and prioritizes culturally responsive, distinctions-based approaches. It also acknowledges the barriers faced by trans and non-binary youth and supports inclusive strategies that promote safety, belonging, and equitable access to employment opportunities.

COMMENTS

Youth Employment Table and Charter

Co-chaired by the City of Toronto and United Way Greater Toronto, the Youth Employment Table has brought together 13 community organizations, employers, funders, City divisions, and youth-serving partners to strengthen coordination and advance measurable youth employment outcomes across Toronto. Between February and May 2026, the Table convened four working sessions that supported the development of a coordinated youth employment roadmap, consolidated high-level summer 2026 employment targets and metrics, and strengthened collaboration across workforce development, training, and employer engagement initiatives. A full list of participating organizations is provided in Attachment 1.

To date, approximately 2,800 new youth employment opportunities have been identified through the Youth Employment Table's collaborative efforts. This includes up to 1,300 opportunities identified by United Way and its agency partners, and 1,500 City-funded opportunities. These efforts are complemented by the federal government expansion of the Canada Summer Jobs program to 100,000 roles nationally, which partners across Toronto are leveraging to increase local hiring and connect more youth to summer employment opportunities.

Key drivers of the City-funded opportunities include:

- *The Building Skills Through Recreation*: Expansion is expected to engage up to 2,000 youth annually in skill development and employment readiness programs and generate up to 1,000 employment opportunities in recreation programs and services.
- *Summer student and apprenticeship-related placements*: In 2026, the City is supporting over 300 youth through summer student and apprenticeship-related placements.
- *CityServe*: A violence prevention initiative that will support the hiring of 100 youth through an eight-week summer employment and community leadership program.
- *The Youth Ambassador Program*: A City-led FIFA World Cup 2026™ legacy initiative, providing 60 youth with paid work experience and training tied to local community activations during the World Cup.

- *Community Youth Academy*: A new pilot workforce development pathway into emergency services, delivered in partnership with the City, Toronto Police Service, Toronto Fire Services, and Seneca Polytechnic. The program provides 40 youth with eight-week, paid summer opportunities focused on skill development and career exploration.
- *The Student Connect Program*: Delivered by Toronto Elections through the City Clerk's Office, is expected to fill approximately 550 roles supporting youth employment as election officials during the 2026 municipal election.

Early outcomes of the Youth Employment Table also include strengthened coordination across workforce development partners and improved workforce navigation supports for youth. For example, Findhelp, in collaboration with the United Way Greater Toronto, The Neighbourhood Group, has developed a website and youth-friendly chatbot platform that connects young people to local employment services, meaningful employment opportunities, volunteer and mentorship opportunities, youth-focused mental health supports, and direct pathways to the Canada Summer Jobs portal. This work supports broader efforts to improve awareness of available opportunities and reduce barriers to accessing employment information and services.

The Table has advanced the development of a proposed Youth Employment Charter, to be finalized by end of June, which will establish a shared foundation for youth employment practices across sectors. The Charter will outline voluntary commitments related to equitable hiring, quality work experience, mentorship and retention supports, accessibility and inclusion, youth engagement, and accountability measures intended to strengthen employment outcomes for youth, particularly youth from equity-deserving communities.

Building on these early results, the Youth Employment Table will continue to align partners around shared goals, strengthen data-driven tracking of outcomes, and identify opportunities to scale high-impact efforts.

Scaling City-Led Workforce Development Efforts

A key component of this work is the development of a consistent and practical approach to defining and tracking youth employment outcomes across programs and partners. Building on the City of Toronto's [Youth Outcomes Framework](#), staff are identifying a common set of indicators that reflect progress along the youth employment pathway. These include participation levels, completion rates, demographic reach, job placements, and transitions into employment, education, or training. Additional indicators will track longer-term outcomes such as job retention and career progression, where feasible.

For example, workforce development initiatives connected to the FIFA World Cup 2026™ and CityServe summer programming will track indicators such as the number of youth participating in training and employment placements, certifications completed, transitions into further employment opportunities, and participation rates among equity-deserving youth. This approach will support more consistent reporting across programs and help identify where additional supports or pathway opportunities may be needed.

Data will be collected through standardized end-of-program surveys and supplemented by administrative program data. This information will support regular reporting, strengthen accountability, and improve the City's ability to identify effective approaches, gaps in service, and areas where further coordination or investment may be required.

City of Toronto Youth Workforce Development: A Spotlight on Key Initiatives

The City of Toronto's workforce development efforts focus on connecting youth, particularly from Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving communities, to full-time, part-time, seasonal, and training-related employment opportunities linked to major-city building initiatives, large-scale events such as the FIFA World Cup 2026™, City-run employment and workforce development programs, including pathways to employment within the City of Toronto and across external employer and community partner networks, and temporary youth hiring opportunities associated with the 2026 Municipal Elections.

CityServe Initiative

The [CityServe](#) pilot launched in October 2025 and is a paid youth employment and civic engagement initiative that provides youth with hands-on community service experience, mentorship, job readiness training, and placements across community organizations and City divisions. Early implementation findings indicate strong participant engagement and high projected completion rates.

Early outcomes also include engagement of 43 youth participants and program coordinators, more than 3,500 community service hours completed through neighbourhood-based projects and City-supported placements, and 52 certifications completed in areas including Mental Health First Aid, cybersecurity, robotics, 3D printing, and job readiness. The initiative has also supported workforce integration placements across seven City divisions and agency partners. This program is performing strongly against its intended objectives, including maintaining high participant engagement, supporting skills and certification attainment, increasing exposure to employment pathways, and achieving strong projected program completion rates, with no participant drop-offs reported to date. Final participant and partner feedback, informed by the Youth Outcomes Framework, will be collected following program completion in Summer 2026.

Building on the program's success, CityServe will be expanded to support an additional 100 youth ages 14 to 18 through an eight-week summer employment and community service. The expansion will provide paid work experience, mentorship, workforce readiness training, mental health supports, and over 20,000 hours of community-based project opportunities focused on community service.

Community Youth Academy Pilot

The Community Youth Academy pilot is a new targeted workforce development pathway into emergency services, delivered in partnership with the City, Toronto Police Service, Toronto Fire Services, and Seneca Polytechnic, that creates paid, skills-building opportunities for 40 youth while also addressing long-term talent pipelines in policing and firefighting. Through this initiative, participants gain early exposure to in-demand public safety careers, earn income, build transferable skills, and access a direct pathway into post-secondary education through eligibility for academic credit at Seneca Polytechnic.

By connecting training, education, and employment, the program helps reduce barriers to entry into these fields, particularly for youth who may not otherwise see themselves reflected in or have access to careers in emergency services. It also supports more diverse and representative recruitment across Toronto Police Service and Toronto Fire Services.

Leveraging the FIFA World Cup 2026™ to deliver Community Benefits

The Community Workforce Development Program helps connect Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving youth to employment, training and career exploration opportunities linked to the FIFA World Cup 2026™ before, during, and after the tournament. The program is designed to create longer-term workforce pathways by supporting youth access to skills development, certifications, paid work experience, sector-specific training, and connections to employers in industries expected to experience increased demand as a result of the tournament and related city-building activities.

As a key component of the City's [FIFA World Cup 2026™ Community Benefits Plan](#), the program advances these goals through voluntary partnerships with private-sector employer champions, employment service providers and community organizations, and City divisions to support coordinated recruitment, training, and placement opportunities for youth across Toronto.

To date, the Community Workforce Development Program has engaged more than 900 youth and community members through career activation events, FIFA World Cup 2026™ information sessions, and City of Toronto workforce development and trainee initiatives. This includes 220 participants at the Youth Career Activation Summit and nearly 400 participants in tournament-time employment information sessions.

In collaboration with Toronto Employment and Social Services and the Toronto FIFA Secretariat, 60 youth in receipt of Ontario Works are being supported through an Intensive Case Management initiative, ten of whom have been selected as FIFA volunteers. The Youth Ambassador Program, a City-led FIFA World Cup 2026™ legacy initiative, is providing 60 youth with paid work experience and training tied to local community activations during the World Cup. The program combines training, mentorship, and hands-on placements to build skills in event operations, customer service, and community engagement. It is designed to ensure that the benefits of hosting the tournament translate into tangible employment pathways.

Additional FIFA World Cup 2026™ legacy programming has also expanded access to sport-based workforce development and recreation employment pathways for youth.

Through the Let's Get Coaching initiative, 288 youth participated in coaching and officiating preparation programming, with 122 youth certified to date through seven training and certification opportunities focused on employability within the soccer and recreation sectors. Additional certification sessions are scheduled for Summer 2026.

To date, youth have participated in certifications, practical workshops, and workforce readiness training, with additional coaching and officiating sessions continuing throughout 2026. Together, these initiatives support skills development, certifications, and early employment pathway opportunities linked to recreation, sport leadership, and community programming.

Through Employer Champion partnerships, a total of eight youth have been hired, with six youth hired through The Team SME internship program and two youth through the FIFA Canada Future Leaders Internship Program. These initial placements serve as a foundation for expanded opportunities.

FIFA Canada is actively recruiting for tournament-time roles, and in response to direction from City Council on March 26, 2026 (EX29.10), staff have engaged FIFA Canada to request equity-related hiring outcomes. Work is also underway to identify youth-focused workforce development opportunities in procurements that fall outside the Social Procurement Policy² intake criteria, including apprenticeships, professional, administrative, technical roles, and work-based learning.

2026 Municipal Election

The [Student Connect program](#), delivered by Toronto Elections through the City of Toronto Clerk's Office, supports youth participation in the municipal election process through paid election official roles for high school students aged 16 and over. Participating schools work with Toronto Elections staff to recruit and support students in paid election official roles, helping youth gain work experience, civic knowledge, and exposure to public service. As of April 2026, 68 schools registered their intent to participate in the program, with approximately 550 youth expected to work in voting places on election day in October.

Toronto Elections continues to prioritize youth hiring through targeted outreach and partnerships, while strengthening connections across City initiatives to support longer-term employment outcomes. This includes linking FIFA-related programs, such as youth volunteer and ambassador initiatives, to paid one-day election roles, creating a pathway from civic participation into formal employment.

Together, these efforts demonstrate how the City is leveraging major events and service delivery opportunities to build a more coordinated youth employment pipeline that supports skills development, work experience, and continued engagement across programs.

² The City's Social Procurement Policy applies workforce development and social value objectives to eligible City procurements that meet established policy thresholds and intake criteria.

Activation Fairs and Employer Engagement

The City's Career Activation Fair model delivers youth employment opportunities directly into communities through an equity-focused, cross-sector approach that connects youth to jobs, employers, and wraparound supports. The model integrates employment opportunities with health, wellness, and social supports to reduce barriers to participation and strengthen long-term employment outcomes for youth.

Between January and May 2026, Social Development supported an additional 11 career activation and job fair events featuring approximately 250 youth employment opportunities. Attendance at these events totalled 1,085 youth, with 180 youth accessing employment and pre-employment supports. Approximately 75 percent of attendees expressed interest in additional support, demonstrating strong demand for integrated, community-based employment services.

The model combines employment opportunities with wraparound supports and inclusive employer engagement to help reduce barriers to participation and strengthen employment outcomes for youth.

Branded Youth Entrepreneurship Conference

Workforce development at the City extends beyond traditional employment pathways to also include entrepreneurship by supporting youth to start and sustain their own businesses.

Since 2012, the Branded Youth Entrepreneurship Conference has engaged more than 4,000 aspiring young entrepreneurs through in-person and virtual events, training sessions, and business development opportunities, with approximately 100 participants annually.

Delivered as part of the City of Toronto's Youth Week, Branded connects Black, newcomer, and equity-deserving youth to mentorship, business development supports, and professional networks. To date, the program has invested over \$250,000 directly into youth-led businesses through pitch competitions and contracted services, supporting business creation, income generation, and long-term economic participation.

It also serves as an entry point into broader entrepreneurship supports, including pathways to initiatives such as the [Summer Company Grant](#), an Ontario government program that provides youth aged 15 to 29 with funding, mentorship, and training to start and operate a small business over the summer. This allows youth participants to further develop and formalize their business ideas while gaining the tools, experience, and supports needed to sustain and expand their ventures.

City of Toronto Next Generation Programs

The City of Toronto continues to advance workforce development through the creation of internal employment and career pathways for youth. Each year, these programs collectively support participants through paid placements, and targeted training opportunities that lead to employment within the City and beyond. Initiatives such as the

Youth Career Development program, Work-Based Learning, Essential Skills, Indigenous Youth Research Associate program, and the Toronto Urban Fellows Program provide participants, with access to meaningful work experience, income, and professional networks.

Outcomes include increased employment readiness, direct hires into City roles, and longer-term career progression across the public and broader labour market. Notably, alumni of these programs have gone on to secure permanent roles within the City and advance into leadership positions across divisions, demonstrating the City's role not only as an employer, but as a builder of diverse talent pipelines and inclusive career pathways.

City-Wide Summer and Student Employment Pathways

The City of Toronto supports a broad range of seasonal and student employment opportunities that provide early work experience, skills development, and pathways into longer-term careers across municipal divisions.

Parks and Recreation represents one of the largest sources of youth summer employment within the City, employing over 10,000 youth and hiring thousands of new youth annually across recreation, aquatics, camps, and community programming. These roles provide accessible, entry-level opportunities for youth to gain work experience, develop leadership and customer service skills, and build connections to future employment within the City. Parks and Recreation hiring is a key driver of the City's overall youth employment numbers during the summer months and plays a significant role in delivering community-based services.

Summer hiring, beyond Parks & Recreation, also occurs across multiple City divisions and agencies in areas such as administrative support, customer service, and program delivery, creating a broad range of paid entry-level opportunities that help youth and students build workplace experience, transferable skills and exposure to careers in the public sector.

The City's apprenticeship programs support individuals pursuing skilled trades certification. Opportunities are delivered across divisions and agencies, including Fleet, Toronto Water, Paramedics, the Toronto Transit Commission and Toronto Community Housing Corporation, with pathways in trades including automotive service, industrial maintenance, and carpentry. In 2026, the City is supporting over 300 youth through summer student and apprenticeship-related placements, contributing to a growing pipeline into various early career pathways.

The City also offers cooperative education placements for students that are designed to provide meaningful, hands-on work experience aligned with their field of study. Cooperative education placements are typically paid and form part of post-secondary academic programs, allowing students to apply classroom learning in a professional setting. While some student placements are unpaid, they offer secondary and post-secondary students with structured learning opportunities, exposure to municipal work environments, and the chance to build relevant skills and experience.

Workforce Development and Systems Change

Community Benefits Hiring

The City of Toronto's Community Benefits Framework embeds equity-focused employment and procurement targets into City contracts, with monitoring and reporting led by Social Development's Community Benefits Unit. Recent outcomes on City-led Community Benefits initiatives are listed below.

In 2018, the City of Toronto signed The Rexdale-Casino Woodbine Community Benefits Agreement with One Toronto Gaming, the City's only standalone community benefits agreement and key initiative of the Community Benefits Framework. The Agreement requires One Toronto Gaming to achieve a range of outcomes related to local and social hiring for casino operations and construction-related employment. Youth hiring is a priority under the Agreement, particularly for youth who identify as members of equity-deserving groups. Since 2018, more than 2,500 positions have been created at the Casino, with 55 percent of construction hires and 21 percent of operational hires self-identifying as youth under the age of 29.

In 2025, the Toronto Builds Policy Framework was adopted to facilitate housing development on City-owned land. Early outcomes from one Toronto Builds site, located at 5207 Dundas Street West, show that 32.7 percent of construction trade workers identified as youth aged 16 to 29. Additional outcomes are expected as more Toronto Builds projects advance.

The Specialized Trades Exploration Program (STEP) to Construction, led by the Toronto District School Board, offers Grade 11 and 12 students the opportunity to explore and learn about skilled trades careers. To date, three students have been successfully placed through Community Benefits Workforce Intermediary connections to a City construction project.

Additionally, the Economic Development and Growth in Employment (EDGE) Incentive Program is a community benefits initiative that supports local economic development by requiring two community benefits hires, including youth, per \$100,000 of grant funding. Youth-related community benefits hiring outcomes will be available in future reporting.

The City continues to expand community benefits implementation on City-led community benefits initiatives, standardizing reporting across projects and strengthening partnerships to support long-term pathways for Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving communities, including for youth.

Youth Employment Pathways and Measurable Outcomes

Youth employment pathways help young people move from initial engagement into longer-term employment by connecting them to supports, skills development, training, work experience, and job opportunities over time. Success is measured not only by participation, but also by outcomes such as skills gained, employment placements, job retention, and progression into further education, training, or long-term opportunities.

Unlike a standalone program or short-term job placement, a youth employment pathway is a coordinated approach that helps young people move toward long-term employment success. It connects education, skills training, work experience and employment opportunities over time, while also providing wraparound supports such as mentorship, mental health resources, transportation assistance and other services that help reduce barriers to participation and employment.

Attachment 2 provides an overview of a Youth Employment Pathways framework, illustrating how coordinated supports, workforce development initiatives, and employment opportunities work together to create long-term pathways to employment for youth.

The following initiatives, and the framework outlined in Attachment 2, highlight collaborative efforts currently underway to strengthen and align youth employment supports across the City, and accelerate meaningful employment pathways for youth.

Increasing youth employment requires coordinated action, shared targets, and consistent outcome tracking across partners. This roadmap establishes a structured approach to increasing youth employment opportunities by aligning city divisions, agencies, community partners, and employers around shared objectives. A key first step was the development of a consolidated youth job inventory across divisions and partners, which established a baseline of existing opportunities and identified possible areas for growth.

Workforce Data Modernization

People and Equity, in collaboration with the Technology Services Division, is leading the Diversity Data Collection and Reporting Modernization capital project, approved in the 2025 Capital Budget.

The scope of the project is an assessment of existing technology for the collection and reporting of workforce socio-demographic data across the employee lifecycle, including consideration of additional variables such as age and postal code, and in alignment with the Data for Equity Strategy, privacy legislation, and human rights requirements.

This may strengthen the City's ability to track employment participation and outcomes across programs, identify service gaps and barriers experienced by equity-deserving youth, and support more informed workforce planning, program improvements, and accountability measures.

The assessment phase is currently underway and is expected to be completed by the third quarter of 2026.

Intergovernmental Advocacy Efforts

While the City plays a critical role in local program delivery and employer engagement, key policy levers such as education, training and labour market programming are shaped by Provincial and Federal governments, respectively. Intergovernmental engagement has been initiated to explore future funding and program opportunities. Discussions with the Provincial staff in February 2026 identified opportunities for continued coordination related to youth employment pathways, system alignment, and improved data and outcomes tracking. Staff engagement with the Federal government officials is currently pending.

Diversity Youth Fellowship & Next Steps

As part of the City's broader efforts to strengthen equitable youth employment pathways and access to civic leadership opportunities, the Diversity Youth Fellowship provides equity-deserving youth aged 18 to 29 with paid placements in Council Members' offices as Constituency Assistants. Since launching in 2018, the program has supported more than 120 youth across the Muslim, Black, Tamil, Filipino, Chinese, Newcomer, and, as of 2025, Indigenous Youth Fellowship streams. The program supports pathways into public service and civic leadership, with many alumni moving into roles within the City of Toronto, Council offices, and community organizations.

In response to Council direction, staff explored the feasibility of establishing a dedicated Fellowship cohort for youth with disabilities, including considerations related to accessibility, accommodation supports, program delivery capacity, staffing resources, mentorship requirements, and the operational and physical space limitations within Council Members' offices. Initial review found that the program is already supporting youth with disabilities, with approximately 25 percent of past fellows self-identifying as having a disability. However, the Fellowship model is closely tied to the operational capacity and office infrastructure of participating Council Members, creating challenges for introducing an additional standalone cohort at this time.

Initial findings suggest that strengthening accessibility within the existing Fellowship model is a more feasible approach. Potential enhancements could include expanded outreach and recruitment, improved accommodation and wraparound supports, strengthened accessibility-related data collection, and participation targets within existing Fellowship streams.

As next steps, Social Development will continue discussions with the Urban Alliance on Race Relations, the City Clerk's Office, People & Equity, and community accessibility partners to further assess opportunities to strengthen accessibility, participant supports, outreach, and program delivery within the Fellowship model.

Staff will also continue to align program delivery with existing City accommodation practices and accessibility supports, while working to ensure equitable and accessible approaches are embedded throughout recruitment, onboarding, and workplace support processes for youth participating in City employment initiatives, including the Diversity Youth Fellowship.

Next Steps and Future Reporting

Next steps will focus on finalizing employer commitments through the Youth Employment Table, advancing implementation of coordinated youth employment data tracking frameworks, and strengthening pathways into employment, training, mentorship, and civic participation for youth across Toronto.

Together, these efforts are intended to improve coordination across programs and partners, expand access to meaningful employment opportunities for youth, and support more consistent measurement of long-term employment outcomes. Staff will continue to report on program outcomes, system coordination efforts, and future program directions.

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SIGNATURE

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Executive Director, Social Development

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Youth Employment Table Membership List
Attachment 2: Youth Employment Pathways Model