



# NextStep:

## The YWCA Multi-Dimensional Mentoring Pilot Project — Final Report

## YWCA NEXTSTEP MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

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## MINISTRY ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### British Columbia Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

The three-year YWCA NextStep Mentorship Program was funded by the British Columbia Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction's (MSDPR) Community and Employer Partnerships Research and Innovation Fund. The project started November 10th, 2014 and completed November 7th, 2017.

Within the MSDPR's agreement with the YWCA, this 36-month research project was implemented to evaluate the effectiveness of a multi-dimensional mentorship intervention program to support 210 individuals who are well-educated, unemployed and poorly integrated into the labour market. In addition, the YWCA would also develop a mentorship model outlining best practices and an evaluation strategy for measuring the impact of mentorship programs—both of which can then be used widely throughout the employment services sector in British Columbia to help improve the effectiveness of existing and future mentorship programming.



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# Introduction

This is the final report for NextStep. NextStep is a research and innovation project where industry professionals provide group and individual mentorship to recently educated graduates who are unemployed to help them better integrate into the British Columbia (BC) labour market. It is designed to offer personal and career development support.

NextStep is a three-year project developed and implemented by the YWCA Metro Vancouver (YWCA) between November 2014 and November 2017. The BC Centre for Employment Excellence has been commissioned by the YWCA to conduct the evaluation.

The project is funded by the BC Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction's Community and Employer Partnership Research & Innovation Fund.

This final report summarizes and analyzes data from all three years of the project. It follows two interim reports that focus on the first two years of implementation of NextStep.



**“My mentee was open to new perspectives and keen to listen and learn. She has a super high level of self-initiative and her baseline is always of a professional standard. The area in which I saw the biggest level of change was her energy increase, her allowing of her personal passions to come through and be seen, and her confidence and self-belief. It was easy to work with her! And I look forward to her ongoing and inevitable success in her career!”**

—NextStep Mentor

## Background

### The Need for NextStep

The YWCA conducted background research that identified a gap in employment services to support individuals with diplomas and degrees who struggle to participate in the labour market, frequently transitioning between unemployment and/or temporary and low-skilled jobs even during periods of good economic opportunities. These individuals have been referred to by some researchers as “Poorly Integrated New Entrants” (PINEs).

The background research conducted between October 2013 and February 2014 included a literature review, focus group studies, and a community consultation.

The community consultation along with focus groups with PINEs suggested that a multi-dimensional mentorship intervention assisting this group would help fill this labour market gap.



# The Intervention

Although there are numerous mentorship programs that serve various groups of job seekers in BC (e.g., immigrants, women, and entrepreneurs), the approach in NextStep to support PINEs using a multi-dimensional intervention had not been tested and evaluated.

Current employment services focus more on individuals with lower credentials and less marketable skills; therefore this project provides valuable insights and lessons for current and future mentorship programs.

The YWCA developed NextStep, a multi-dimensional mentorship intervention, to better support career development opportunities for PINEs. The intervention includes the following three key mentorship components: one-to-one mentorship, group mentorship and peer mentorship.

## One-to-One Mentorship

Offers customized support, where a mentor (a volunteer who has demonstrated career success in his/her professional field/industry) can offer industry specific knowledge, career advice, information and access to his/her network to support a mentee (a poorly integrated new entrant) to job search more effectively. With valuable and proven information on industry practices, mentors can provide the mentees with guidance on effective job search strategies, current industry specific information, as well as open doors to industry networks and the hidden job market. These mentors have not only demonstrated career success in their industry, but they also come to the program with extensive industry knowledge and networks, thereby providing avenues to connect job seekers with employers.

## Group Mentorship

Although the support is not as intensive or customized as the one-to-one mentorship support, group mentorship provides added value to mentees by further expanding and maximizing access to professional networks and supports through connections with multiple mentors in the program.



## Peer Mentorship

Mentorship with fellow mentees who are also conducting a professional job search helps further extend professional networks, as well as creates comradery that helps maintain job search motivation.

# Project Objectives

The project has the following three objectives:

1. To develop and implement a three-year research project that tests a multi-dimensional mentorship intervention which engages a target of 210 PINEs
2. To evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention in increasing self-esteem, confidence, motivation, industry networks and labour market attachment
3. To provide and share recommendations and best practices as well as the program and evaluation models – a “toolkit” – to support other BC employment services providers in implementing a similar program.



## Target Population – Eligibility

NextStep is offered to both women and men<sup>1</sup> who:

- Are unemployed (or working less than 20 hours per week) at the time of program admission
- Are living in Metro Vancouver and permitted to work in Canada
- Have completed post-secondary education/training within the past 1-5 years<sup>2</sup>
- Have been conducting a professional job search without success for at least 12 months at the time of program admission
- Are seeking employment in professional or skilled careers
- Are able to make a six-month commitment

<sup>1</sup> First time a YWCA Mentorship program has been offered to men.

<sup>2</sup> Graduates from Fall 2010 – February 2014 for the first year cohort, Fall 2011 – February 2015 for the second year cohort and Fall 2012 – January 2016 for the third year cohort.

# The Research Design

In order to evaluate NextStep's impact on key expected outcomes, the evaluation was designed as a longitudinal random assignment evaluation. The study recruited individuals in three annual intakes.

In this design, eligible individuals are randomly assigned to one of two groups.

1. Half of eligible individuals are assigned to the intervention group and are eligible for one-to-one mentorship as well as group and peer mentorship. In other words, individuals in the intervention group received all three mentorship components in NextStep.
2. The other half of the eligible individuals are assigned to the comparison group and receive ONLY two components – group and peer mentorship. They are not eligible to receive one-to-one mentorship.

Data on these two groups' job search, networking, employment and other characteristics were collected from surveys and program administrative sources from the time that participants agreed to take part in the project. Differences between the intervention group and comparison group in the outcomes of interest determined the difference the program made.

The random assignment design was chosen for NextStep because it produces the most reliable estimates of an intervention's impacts. In this case, the intervention is one-to-one mentorship.





# Evaluation Approach

## Research Questions

The project proposed to address three key research questions:

1. Do participants who complete a multi-dimensional mentorship intervention obtain and maintain employment more effectively than those who complete only peer and group mentorship interventions?
2. What are the characteristics of participants who successfully gain and maintain employment?
3. Is mentorship an effective strategy for producing positive employment outcomes for PINES?

## Methodology

Methods:

A mixed research methods approach was used to document effects comprehensively and allow for an in-depth assessment. The data sources are:

- NextStep program administrative records:
  - Data from mentee/mentor participation in activities such as workshops/networking events.
- Surveys with participants: Online baseline and follow-up surveys, post-program evaluations, mentee/mentor match evaluations:
  - Short 10 to 20 minute surveys/evaluations used to study any reported changes by participants related to areas such as knowledge, confidence, job search strategies and barriers to employment. All three cohorts completed a baseline survey. Due to the project completion date occurring shortly after the completion of the final one-to-one mentorship matches, only the first two cohorts completed the follow-up survey and were included in the impact analysis.
- Focus groups (in Years One and Two)
  - One hour focus groups conducted with participants to gain a deeper understanding of PINES' needs, supports and services accessed, existing gaps, outcomes, experience with the program (intervention group in Years One and Two; comparison group in Year Two only)
  - One hour focus group conducted with participants meeting program eligibility but NOT participating in NextStep in order to gain a better understanding of what PINES would do on their own in the absence of NextStep (Year One only)
- Depth interview with NextStep program staff
  - Annual 1 to 1.5 hour interviews conducted to acquire a better understand of the program, its relevancy for participants, and challenges and solutions to program implementation
- Depth interviews with mentors (Year One only)
  - 20-minute one-to-one interviews conducted with seven mentors to gain a deeper understanding of qualities and practices of strong mentors
- Observations of information sessions, workshops, and events
  - Attendance at most workshops and events to gain an understanding of the program activities and interactions between program staff, mentors and mentees

# Implementation

## Program Activities

Program intake and training. Program staff recruited mentees from a wide variety of sources. After being accepted into the program, new mentees and mentors receive orientation training as part of the intake process:

### Mentees

- Mentees assigned to group and peer mentorship attend the Group Mentee Stream Training. The training provides an overview of the program including information on how to make use of the program, active job searching, action plans and the workshops and networking events. In Year One, the training was delivered in small group sessions at the YWCA Metro Vancouver lasting approximately 1.5 hours. In Years Two and Three, the training was delivered via an online module.
- Mentees assigned to one-to-one mentorship attend the 1:1 Mentee Stream Training. This training includes the same content as the group and peer mentorship training, plus information on exchanging with the mentor and making the most of the relationship. This training is delivered in small group sessions at the YWCA Metro Vancouver and lasts approximately 2.5 hours.

### Mentors

New mentors are thoroughly screened by NextStep staff before being accepted into the program. Staff speak with each new mentor about their interest in NextStep, background and experience. After potential mentors submit a program application, they attend a 1.5-hour orientation session at the YWCA that reviews NextStep commitments and mentor responsibilities.

### Group and Peer Mentorship Events

All program participants in both the intervention and comparison groups were encouraged to attend all of the group and peer mentorship events.

In each of the three years, the program delivered the same four program workshops and four networking mingles. These sessions were 2 to 2.5 hours in length.

In the first and second years, program participants were invited to an additional fifth workshop, the Deloitte Impact Day, which was held after the volunteer appreciation and wrap-up event.

The following table lists each of the group and peer mentorship events by year.

Event Type	Event Description	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Program Workshops	Networking Skills Workshop	✓	✓	✓
	Leadership Skills Workshop	✓	✓	✓
	Information Interviews Workshop	✓	✓	✓
	Confidence/Self-esteem Workshop	✓	✓	✓
	Deloitte Impact Day	✓	✓	X
Networking Mingles	4 Networking Mingles	✓	✓	✓
	Volunteer Appreciation and Wrap-up	✓	✓	✓

## One-to-One Mentorship.

In addition to access to the group and peer mentorship events, the participants in the intervention group are also matched with a mentor by the NextStep program staff:

- Mentors are volunteers with demonstrated career success and can offer industry specific knowledge, career advice, information and access to his/her network to support a mentee to job search more effectively.
- Program staff implement an intensive matching process when assigning mentors and mentees. The staff begin by identifying a mentor from their database that would likely be compatible with the new mentee, usually on the basis of shared industry experience and interests.
- When a potential match is identified, staff consult with the mentor to create buy-in and avoid mentee rejection. This rarely happens and almost all matches move forward smoothly. When the mentor agrees to the match, staff send information to the mentee and mentor about the other party and make the introduction.
- The mentee and mentor are expected to make a six month commitment.
- The mentee and mentor are expected to meet in person at least once monthly.



# Analysis and Findings

## Staff

The NextStep program team consists of two staff members, a Program Manager and a Program Coordinator, with oversight from a Senior Manager. They have many years of experience between them in employment and mentorship programming. They were also familiar with the programs and services at the YWCA and thus leveraged the employment program infrastructure and networks at the YWCA to implement NextStep. Focus group participants unanimously praised the NextStep staff’s dedication and engagement with the program, mentioning that they felt very well supported.

## Eligibility

The program maintained the same eligibility criteria for all three years of implementation.

## Referral Sources

The following table summarizes the referral sources for NextStep. The most common referral sources reported by the 183 participants were WorkBC Centres (36%), other (22%), word of mouth (17%), and other YWCA programs (16%).

Referral Sources	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Overall
WorkBC Centres	42%	33%	32%	36%
Word of Mouth	20%	14%	17%	17%
Other YWCA Programs	15%	17%	17%	16%
Community Agencies	0%	10%	0%	3%
Facebook	2%	2%	6%	3%
Post-secondary Institutions	3%	0%	5%	3%
Other	17%	24%	24%	22%

## Recruitment

In Year Two, staff expanded recruitment efforts to include additional sources. In Year Three, staff increased participant numbers earlier in the year by beginning to market the program in June and recruitment in August. Staff focused more on targeted recruitment methods so as to avoid last-minute marketing efforts.



## Enrollment and Assignment to the Intervention and Comparison Groups

The following table summarizes enrollment numbers and participation in NextStep over the three years.

Applicants were screened out if they did not meet one or more of the eligibility criteria. In each year 2 out of 3 applicants were screened out. Job searching for less than 12 months was the most common reason applicants were ineligible. The following table shows the numbers of eligible participants assigned to the intervention and comparison groups in each of the three years. Both applications and participants were highest in the third year.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Applications	156	173	190	522
Ineligible	97	115	124 <sup>1</sup>	336
Eligible	59	58	66	183
1-to-1 mentorship (Intervention Group)	29	28	33	90
Group and Peer Mentorship (Comparison Group)	30	30	33	93

<sup>1</sup> 45 of the 124 applications were incomplete online applications

## Profile of Participants by Intervention and Comparison Groups

The next three tables show the demographic profile of the 183 program participants according to characteristics reported in the baseline survey.

The baseline surveys were completed by participants on a continuous intake basis each year:

- Year One: January to June 2015
- Year Two: October 2015 to March 2016
- Year Three: September 2016 to January 2017

Random assignment was conducted after participants completed the baseline survey.

### Participant Profile Highlights

Demographic characteristics are shown in the table below. Aside from the decrease in participants holding a post-graduate degree, diploma or certificate after Year One, the demographics profile over the three years stayed fairly consistent.

Demographic		Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Overall
Age	% aged 34 or younger	69.5%	79.3%	78.8%	76.0%
Location	% living in Vancouver	50.8%	50.0%	47.0%	49.2%
Immigration	% born outside of Canada	69.5%	65.5%	59.1%	64.5%
Language	% of whom English is not the first language	52.5%	55.2%	53.0%	53.6%
Education	% holding a post-graduate degree/diploma/certificate	50.8%	31.0%	30.3%	37.2%
	% holding a university undergraduate degree	45.7%	56.9%	56.0%	53.0%
Employment	% that worked for less than 12 months with their previous employer	72.8%	74.1%	72.7%	73.2%
Mentorship	% that had no prior experience with mentorship programs	86.4%	84.5%	86.4%	85.5%



## Profile of Participants by Control and Intervention Groups

Characteristics at Baseline	Control Group	Intervention Group	Total	% of Sample
<b>Approximate Age of Participants (years)</b>				
Under 25	17	11	28	15.3%
25 to 34	47	64	111	60.7%
35 to 44	15	9	24	13.1%
45 to 54	10	4	14	7.7%
55 and Older	4	2	6	3.3%
<b>Residence</b>				
Vancouver	46	44	90	49.2%
Outside of Vancouver	47	46	93	50.8%
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	28	35	63	34.4%
Female	65	55	120	65.6%
<b>Birth Country</b>				
Canada	37	28	65	35.5%
Outside Canada	56	62	118	64.5%
<b>English as First Language</b>				
Yes	52	33	85	46.4%
No	41	57	98	53.6%
<b>Highest Level of Education Completed</b>				
University postgraduate degree, diploma or certificate	35	33	68	37.2%
University undergraduate degree	47	50	97	53.0%
University certificate or diploma below the bachelor level	4	4	8	4.4%
College certificate or diploma	7	3	10	5.5%
<b>Employment</b>				
Not working	51	53	104	56.8%
Self-employed	2	0	2	1.1%
Working part-time	34	32	66	36.1%
Working full-time	6	5	11	6.0%
<b>Number of Months Worked for Previous Employer or Business</b>				
Less than 6 months	62	50	112	61.2%
6 months to 11 months	11	11	22	12.0%
12 months to 17 months	7	9	16	8.7%
18 months to 23 months	3	5	8	4.4%
24 to 71 months	8	13	21	11.5%
72 months and over	2	2	4	2.2%
<b>Previous Experience with Mentorship</b>				
Yes	11	15	26	14.2%
No	82	75	157	85.8%

## Under the Target

The 183 mentees enrolled in NextStep fell short of the target of 210 (70 per year). The majority of applicants – 65% – were screened out due to program ineligibility. NextStep staff tried different ways to meet the target (e.g., expanding referral sources, starting recruitment earlier) but the extra efforts resulted in minimal effects on the enrollment numbers.

## Mentors

The program had access to the YWCA database of 150 to 180 mentors for the NextStep program. Many of the mentors were involved in previous YWCA mentoring programs for women such as Connect to Success. Some mentors participated in more than one year of NextStep. Identifying suitable mentors for NextStep was not an issue and program staff stopped mentor recruitment in November 2016.

## Participation in Group/Peer Events

The table below shows the participation of mentees and mentors in the group and peer mentorship events that were offered to individuals in both the intervention and comparison groups as well as to mentors. Attendance by mentees at these events over the three years ranged from 13% to 40%. The Information Interviews Skills Workshop had the highest attendance by mentees (40%) and the Leadership Skills Workshop had the highest attendance by mentors.

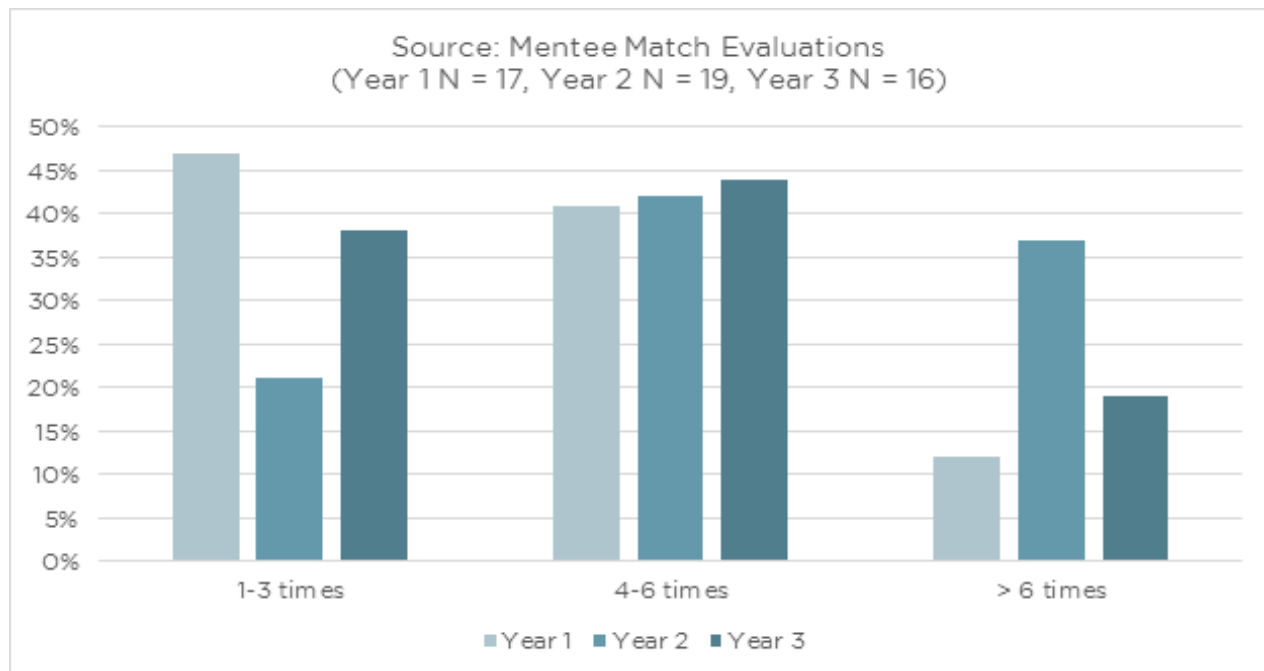


Event	# of Mentees				# of Mentors			
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Networking Skills Workshop	20	16	17	53	10	4	8	22
Leadership Skills Workshop	20	23	18	61	15	8	11	34
Information Interviews Skills Workshop	22	27	25	74	3	9	6	18
Confidence and Self-Esteem	11	13	24	48	4	9	14	27
Networking Mingle #1	16	16	25	57	7	8	14	29
Networking Mingle #2	13	10	11	34	8	8	8	24
Networking Mingle #3	12	8	3	23	6	5	3	14
Networking Mingle #4	10	11	6	27	8	5	3	16
Volunteer Appreciation and Wrap-up	12	17	17	46	14	20	21	55
Deloitte Interview Skills Bootcamp - Impact Day	11	14	N/A	25	0	0	N/A	0

## Participation in One-to-One Mentorship

All mentees in the intervention group reported being matched with mentors. 94% reported completing the intervention.

The next figure illustrates the number of meetings between mentees and mentors for all three years, as reported by the mentees in the mentee match evaluations. 65% of mentees reported meeting with their mentors four or more times over the six months.



## Mentee Experience

The following highlights the experience from mentees based on the data collected from the mentee program evaluations (n = 128) and from the two focus groups:

- Mentees identified the Networking Skills and Informational Interviews workshops as the most useful.
- Feedback on overall usefulness of workshops was mixed due to varying levels of employment program experience and job search competency. Some learned new information; for others it was repetitive. The opportunity to touch base with other mentees and program mentors was cited as a plus.
- 58% of participants set up informational interviews or exchanged contacts with other mentees or mentors during networking mingles/workshops. This number decreased over the three years.
- The three job search activities in which the most participants reported improvements were interview skills (51%), presentation/self-marketing skills (50%) and industry research skills (48%). The activity improved the least frequently was cold calling (17%).
- The most commonly improved networking-related skills were networking skills (72%) and confidence (67%).

## Confidence

The most frequent response to the single most important thing that participants got as a result of participating in NextStep was increased confidence in networking and informational interviews. This was cited in both the program evaluations as well as the focus groups. This is supported by mentors' observations that "taking initiative" was the change/improvement most seen in their mentees.

**"My mentor shared a lot of tips from his experience searching for a job in a new city. He also connected me to a lot of his contacts who helped me learn about different industries/companies/opportunities in the city and about job searching in general... and also provided me with a lot of emotional support and confidence boosting when I needed it."**

—NextStep Participant

## Learning from Mentors

The most commonly cited things that one-to-one mentees learned from their mentors were:

- Increased knowledge of and/or access to professional networks/associations
- Increased confidence
- Improved networking skills
- Cover letter and resume support

## Emotional Support

Participants identified emotional support (motivation, encouragement) as an important factor in a successful mentor-mentee relationship. This was cited by both participants searching for a job, as well as those who started a new position after enrolling in the program. This helped with both finding a job in their industry, as well as maintaining it after securing a position.

## Satisfaction

The next table reports mentees' satisfaction with the NextStep program as reported in the program evaluations.

Response	Percentage	Count
Very satisfied	30%	37
Satisfied	37%	45
Somewhat satisfied	22%	27
Not satisfied	9%	11
Very unsatisfied	2%	2

- 89% of all respondents were at least somewhat satisfied with NextStep. 37% said they were satisfied and 30% said they were very satisfied.
- 90% would refer the program to a friend.
- 73% would consider being a mentor in the future.

# One-to-one Mentee Experience

This section reports the experience of individuals receiving **one-to-one mentorship (the intervention group)** and is based on 52 mentee match evaluations:

- 68% of relationships included at least 4 meetings.
- 81% of mentees plan to stay in contact beyond the six-month mark.
- 90% of mentees claim their mentorship match was a success.
- The top four improved job search activities were:
  - Updated resume (66%)
  - Knowledge of local job opportunities (64%)
  - Employer expectations (58%)
  - Interview skills (56%)
- The top two improved networking-related skills for one-to-one mentees were the same as the top two for all participants:
  - Improved networking skills (71%)
  - Increased confidence (69%)

## Satisfaction

Based on the information from the mentee match evaluations, 92% of mentees in the intervention group were satisfied or very satisfied with their overall experience with their mentor.

- 98% would recommend mentorship to a friend.
- 86% would consider being a mentor in the future.





# Estimated Impacts – Years One and Two

This section presents the impact results based on the information collected from the follow-up survey in Years One and Two. The project timeline did not allow for a follow-up survey to be administered to Year Three participants. In Years One and Two the survey was administered approximately six months after the last formal project contact or event.

## Response Rate

- 106 out of the 117 participants (90.6%) completed the six-month follow-up survey — 53 each in the intervention and comparison groups.

## Methodology

- The technique used to measure or estimate the experimental impacts of NextStep is difference-in-difference (differencing), a method suitable for experiments with small numbers or potential variations between groups since it increases the precision of the analysis. That is, differencing has the potential to remove the remaining observed and unobserved differences between the intervention and comparison groups that were not removed by random assignment. In the simplest form under this methodology, the employment rate collected for the intervention group at baseline is subtracted from the employment rate at the six-month follow-up. A similar subtraction (or difference) is computed for the comparison group. The average difference in the comparison group is then subtracted from the average difference in the intervention group to estimate the impact of NextStep on the employment rate.
- The results need to be interpreted with some caution as the sample number is small. Significant impacts are unlikely to be detected when the magnitude is not sizeable.

## Mobility

19 participants (18% of sample; 9 – intervention and 10 – comparison) moved regions since the baseline.

- 11 moved from one region of the Lower Mainland to another and 1 moved to another region of BC.
- 7 moved to another province (3) or country (4).

## Education or Training

38 participants (36% of sample; 23 – intervention and 15 – comparison) started education programs or courses since they enrolled in NextStep.

- Examples include English language classes, technical courses, digital and web courses, and diplomas/certificates/degrees at postsecondary institutions.
- 7 of the 38 participants took the program or course as a result of something they learned from NextStep or from their mentor.

## Life Satisfaction

Both groups report an increase in life satisfaction over the project period. However, this is not a statistically significant result.

## Job Search Self-Efficacy

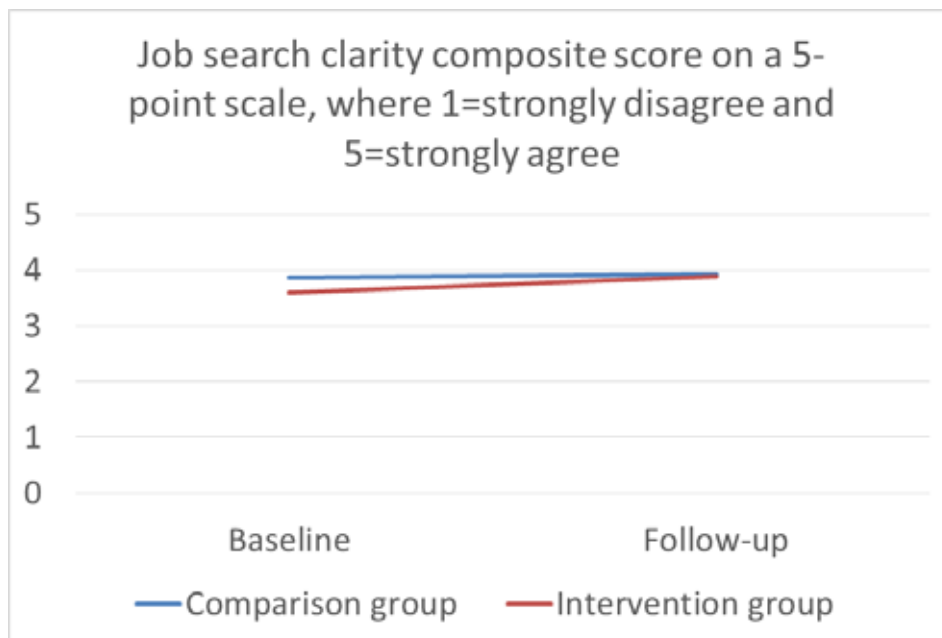
There is an upward trend in job search self-efficacy for participants in the intervention group, albeit not statistically significant. However, when looking at the 11 items that composed this scale, there are three areas in which the program had a positive impact:

- Use social networks to obtain job leads.\*\*\*
- Prepare resumes that will get you interviews.\*
- Impress interviewers during employment interviews.\*\*

**Statistical significance levels are indicated as: \* = 10 per cent, \*\* = 5 per cent, and \*\*\* = 1 per cent**

## Job Search Clarity

There is a small but statistically significant positive impact at the 10% level for the intervention group in the level of clarity about the type of career, work and job the individuals are looking for.



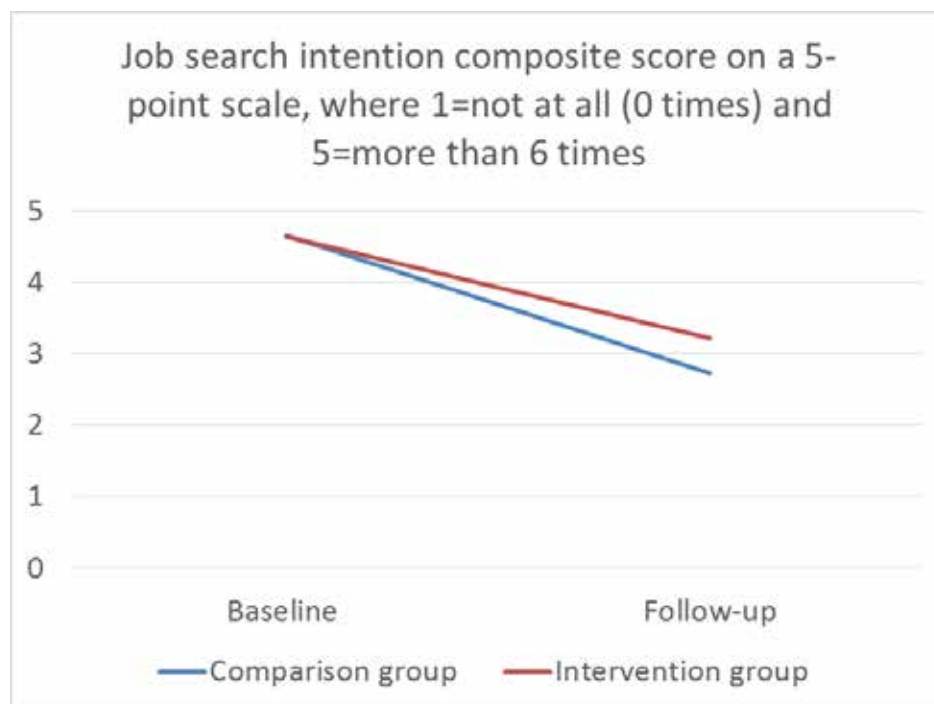
The job search clarity scale is composed of eight items. When looking at the individual items, the intervention had positive impacts in the following two areas:

- I do not have very clear job search objectives.\*\*
- It is not very clear to me where I should be looking for a job.\*\*



## Job Search Intention

Both groups experienced a downward trend in job search intention. However, the decrease is smaller for the intervention group (although not statistically significant). This may be due in large part to the higher proportion of participants who are employed at follow-up compared to baseline.



The job search intention scale is composed of 11 items. When looking at the individual items, the intervention had positive impacts in the following three areas:

- Read the help wanted ads in newspaper, journal, job websites.\*\*\*
- Make enquires or visit prospective employers directly to ask about job opportunities.\*\*\*
- Go to job interview.\*\*

## Job Search Intensity

A downward but not statistically significant trend was observed for job search intensity, which determined the extent to which individuals engaged in selected job search activities over the previous four weeks.

## Networking Comfort and Networking Intensity

No statistically significant differences were observed in these areas between the intervention and comparison groups. However, when looking at the individual items of the eight-item networking comfort scale, a negative impact can be observed for the intervention group in the following item:

- I am comfortable asking my friends for advice regarding my job search.\*\*

The following table summarizes the estimated job search and networking impacts in Years One and Two of NextStep.

Scale	Direction	Overall Significance?
Job search self-efficacy	↑	No
Job search clarity	↑	Yes (*)
Job search intention	↓	No
Job search intensity	↓	No
Networking comfort	↓	No
Networking intensity	■	No
Employment status	↓	No
Full-time employment	↑	No
Life satisfaction	↑	No

## Employment Status

A primary goal of the intervention is to increase employment outcomes for participants. Indeed, there is a large positive trend in gaining employment for both groups – with a focus on full-time employment for intervention group participants. However, there is no significant difference between the two groups.

Overall, for both groups combined, 87% are working full-time, working part-time or self-employed compared to 40% at baseline.

Characteristics	Comparison Group		Intervention Group	
Employment	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
	n=60	n=53	n=57	n=53
Not working	60%	9%	60%	17%
Self-employed	3%	9%	0%	6%
Working part-time	32%	21%	37%	17%
Working full-time	5%	60%	4%	60%

## Most Significant Change

Participants were asked to identify the most significant change that has taken place in their career search as a result of participating in the program. The three most significant changes identified by participants as a result of their participation in NextStep were:

- Better job search skills
- Increased confidence
- Increased number of contacts and better networking skills

## Better Job Search Skills

Participants said they were using a proactive approach to identify potential employers and to reach out to them.

**“The overall change in mindset from passively looking for a job to very actively exploring all avenues of my job search. Also I realized the need to make contacts and ask questions even when it might feel awkward. I think this change in mindset was a result of realizing that I alone am responsible for finding a job and one will not be handed or presented to me - I would need to really fight for a position I wanted. I gained confidence and a more ‘go-getter’ attitude.”**

## Increased Confidence

Participants mentioned being more confident in their skills, knowledge and abilities at all steps of the job search process.

**“I have gained much more confidence in my job search. I also got more involved in the engineering community. I completed a few courses that were related to my industry.”**

## Increased Number of Contacts and Better Networking Skills

For many, the program highlighted the importance of networking in the job search process and allowed participants to gain contacts in their field. This is an interesting finding since networking intensity seemed to decrease from baseline to follow-up.

**A participant explains that NextStep gave them “that extra push to do more networking since I am introverted and networking is not something I would push myself so strongly to do.”**



## Most Significant Changes Mentioned in the Comparison Group

Participants in the comparison group also noted an **increase in confidence and in the number of contacts** as the most significant changes they experienced from the program.

### No Change

However, some participants in the comparison group mentioned that they did not experience any changes due to the program. As explained by one participant:

“I was not active with this program, because my goal when signing in was to get a mentor. I also participated in different job search programs, workshops, and networking events, thus many of the workshops offered by NextStep were redundant for me.”

## Satisfaction with the Program

The two groups differ in terms of mentoring relationships meeting expectations.

- 72% of participants in the intervention group indicated so compared to only 39% in the comparison group.
- Reasons given by those who indicated not having their expectations met were mostly due to the lack of perceived help of the mentor, not completing the program, or not being assigned a one-on-one mentor.

“I would have liked a mentor more related to my field who could give help to my struggling self by narrowing my purpose and in turn the plan for the job hunt.”

- 61% have recommended the program to a friend and an overwhelming majority – 90% – would recommend it to a friend.

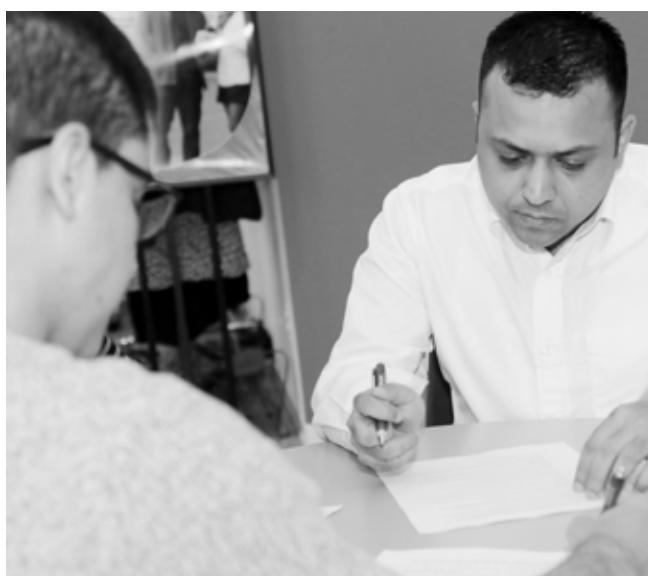


# Mentor Experience

Mentors are a key part of the success for any mentorship program. 68% of mentors reporting in the Mentors Match Evaluations rated their experience as satisfying or very satisfying:

Response		Count
Very satisfying	42%	18
Satisfying	26%	11
Somewhat satisfying	28%	12
Not satisfying	5%	2
Very unsatisfying	0%	0

- 98% of mentors would consider being a mentor again and 100% would recommend mentorship to a friend or colleague.
- Sharing knowledge, helping their mentee succeed and the mentees' high level of proactivity were cited as the best parts of working with their mentees.
- In depth interviews with staff, they indicated that no active recruitment of mentors was needed because of the high relative numbers of mentors to mentees. Potential mentors are well-aware of the YWCA and are constantly seeking out participation in the program. Staff ended mentor intake early in the third year of NextStep.



# Program Staff Experience

This section summarizes key observations from program staff:

- Program staff made a concerted effort to maintain consistency in the program model over all three years. Mentors approached staff to present other workshop topics to mentees in the NextStep program, but these offers were not accepted in order to maintain fidelity to the program. While topics presented in the workshops were the same between the three years, some presenters changed and the workshop order changed to meet scheduling needs. The program team also experienced a staffing change during Year Two.
- In Year Two, staff added career offices in post secondary institutions, their own professional networks, hiring fairs, WorkBC Centres, and greater use of LinkedIn to the original participant recruitment methods in Year One. Despite the additional efforts, staff observed that recruitment was more difficult in year two, and a few of the additional methods used did not result in eligible participants in the program.
- Staff began recruitment earlier in Year Three and remarked that the online survey tool implemented in Year Three made the screening process more efficient.

# Recommendations for Improvement from Participants

The following are selected program recommendations from participants:

- Modify eligibility criteria so that more people can benefit from the program.
- Match more mentees to a mentor (e.g., 1 mentor:2 mentees or small group model; or allow mentees from the comparison group to “shadow” matched mentees).
- Connect more with post-secondary institutions.
- Add workshops on self-employment and temporary/contract work.
- Make it mandatory at workshops and mingles to exchange information with other people.
- Ask facilitators to incorporate more personalized industry-specific check-in.
- Encourage more mentors to attend workshops.
- Circulate a master mentee contact list.
- Schedule an “Alumni” gathering after three years.

# Recommendations for Improvement from the Evaluators

The following are program recommendations from the evaluators:

- A mentoring program is not an employment program. To be effective, mentoring programs should be used in combination with other employment programs and services.
- If there is enough demand from mentees or the target population, a sector-based approach may be effective (e.g., finance, IT).
- Create opportunities to ensure the networks established can continue after the completion of the program.
- Use social media (e.g., LinkedIn or Facebook) to support a “community of practice”.
- Smaller communities/organizations may find it harder to identify suitable mentors; they may need to leverage other programs or rely on other methods for mentees and mentors to connect such as Skype or telephone.
- Participants in NextStep indicated cold calling skills were the least improved; consider another approach to building this competence if it is considered a valuable asset.
- Build on past mentees in the program for referrals.
- Job search intensity or the extent to which individuals engage in job search activities tend to decrease over time and may need a “booster” to maintain the momentum.
- Consider adding a mental health component to the program to support mentees.
- Evaluate the progress and success of your program.



# Revisiting the Project Objectives

This section takes a closer look at the project's three objectives and to what extent they were met.

## **1. To develop and implement a three-year research project that tests a multi-dimensional mentorship intervention which engages a target of 210 PINEs**

The YWCA successfully developed and implemented NextStep, a multi-dimensional intervention for Poorly Integrated New Entrants to the labour market. There were a total of 183 participants over three years and so the target of 210 participants was not met, falling short by 27 participants. NextStep staff implemented appropriate methods to address this issue and while applicant numbers increased, the number of eligible participants remained consistent over the three years and the extra efforts did not result in any substantial gains.

## **2. To evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention in increasing self esteem, confidence, motivation, industry networks and labour market attachment**

This report documents the evaluation of NextStep. While the evaluation did not identify changes to employment outcomes, it did find changes to a sizeable number of intermediary outcomes such as job search clarity.

## **3. To provide and share recommendations and best practices as well as the program and evaluation models – a “toolkit” – to support other BC employment services providers in implementing a similar program**

The NextStep staff team will compile a toolkit to support others in implementing a program similar to NextStep. The toolkit will include recommendations and best practices as well as the program and evaluation models. The recommendations and best practices will include those identified in the evaluation.

# Revisiting the Research Questions

Returning now to the evaluation approach, this section looks at the three key research questions:

**1. Do participants who complete a multi-dimensional mentorship intervention obtain and maintain employment more effectively than those who complete only peer and group mentorship interventions?**

Employment outcomes were measured at approximately six months following the completion of program activities for the Year One and Year Two participants that completed the follow-up survey. Of these 106 individuals, 5% were employed full-time at baseline and 60% were employed full-time at follow-up. However, there was no significant difference in full-time employment between those that received the multi-dimensional mentorship intervention and those that completed only peer and group mentorship.

**2. What are the characteristics of participants who successfully gain and maintain employment?**

The evaluation did not identify any key characteristics of participants who successfully gained and maintained employment at a higher rate.

**3. Is mentorship an effective strategy for producing positive employment outcomes for PINEs?**

The results do not suggest that the one-to-one mentorship intervention as designed and implemented in NextStep produced any significant difference in employment outcomes between the intervention and comparison groups.





# Remarks from a NextStep Mentee

**“I was all alone in my job search journey and it was quite honestly a very, very frightening experience for me... I was very certain that there was something that was not working for me but I was just not able to tell what it was and how I could fix it.**

**Working with Amy, I have gained so much clarity and focus on where I see myself going and what my goals are and how I want to get there... Suddenly my applications are starting to get noticed.... Amy has introduced me to some fantastic people in her networks and I’m forming meaningful relationships with them and learning something truly remarkable from each and every one of them. I have noticed a huge transformation in my confidence level since working with Amy... She often reminds me that a great opportunity is just around the corner.**

**I have met some truly amazing mentors through workshops and mingles, all of whom have positively impacted me. I have also met and interacted with some very talented fellow mentees. My experience with the NextStep program has been absolutely wonderful and truly inspiring.”**

***- Puja Prakash, NextStep Mentee***

## Concluding Remarks

The implementation of the NextStep program occurred as planned. Program staff intentionally maintained the fidelity of the program despite potential opportunities to deviate from the set program.

The number of applications and participants increased in year three. Although program staff worked diligently to meet the enrollment targets, utilizing multiple and diverse methods of recruitment, the numbers fell short of the 210 target participants.

Their wealth of their experience in the delivery of mentorship programs made the YWCA well-positioned to implement a multi-dimensional mentorship research project. Both mentees and mentors reported high satisfaction rates and a positive experience with NextStep.

NextStep will live on in the form of a best practices toolkit.



## Contact information

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