



EMPLOYER GUIDE:

# Successful Futures for Opportunity Youth in Alberta

*Prepared by PolicyWise for Children & Families as part of a project funded by the Max Bell Foundation, JP Morgan Chase Foundation, and an anonymous sponsor.*



**PolicyWise**  
for Children & Families

## Want to make a difference?

Are you an employer in Alberta who wants a future where all young people have the chance to succeed? Do you want to improve equity, diversity, and inclusion at your workplace and in your community? Is your organization socially conscious and community-minded? Are you concerned about skills shortages and an aging workforce? How would you like to leverage the creative power of youth to excel in your sector?

## Why Opportunity Youth and why now?

Opportunity Youth (OY) are 18-29 year olds not engaged in training, education, or employment. Hiring OY can be a competitive advantage, leading to higher retention rates, more robust talent pipelines, expanded workforce diversity, and stronger employee satisfaction. At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated systemic inequities faced by OY in employment and education, for example through housing insecurity, poverty, mental health issues, among other barriers.



### Who are Opportunity Youth?

18-29 year olds not engaged in training, education, or employment. OY are excluded from training, education, and employment opportunities because of mental health issues, housing insecurity, and poverty, to name a few.

# Employers are key to building a brighter future for Opportunity Youth in Alberta.

The future of economic and social prosperity in Alberta depends on the success of our youth transitioning into employment. There are skill shortages forecasted, an outmigration of workers, and an aging workforce. A targeted approach to including OY is required.

## Employer and youth-serving agency partnership

"It really helps the process because they know the candidate better than us, they can be honest about what's needed from the candidate, where the candidate can't express what's needed...And we will advocate internally to try to get them into positions of employment that will match their abilities."

- Alberta-based employer

## What can you do?

As an employer, you and your organization can make a positive difference in the lives of OY in Alberta. We outline 5 activities you can undertake below. We also provide resources and links to potential funding opportunities, supports, and partners.

1

Call on the Alberta government to ***create and implement a provincial youth employment strategy*** that includes targeted support for OY. In the meantime, advocate for both employer and OY needs in existing government strategy implementation. For example through Alberta 2030: Building Skills for Jobs, which is aimed at transforming the post-secondary education system. <https://www.alberta.ca/alberta-2030-building-skills-for-jobs.aspx>



2

**Leverage existing provincial and federal programs,** funding, and opportunities in place to support employers, aid recovery from COVID-19, and target groups who've experienced the most barriers to employment and training, like OY. For example:

**ALBERTA'S LABOUR MARKET PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM:**

Develop OY-supporting proposals with community organizations and the provincial government. Funds can support: developing a strategic plan to prepare for future skill requirements and/or prevent skills shortages; or sharing best practices in human resource development and career/employment training; or collecting data on OY needs and outcomes in different regions of the province. See <https://www.alberta.ca/workforce-partnerships.aspx>

**ALBERTA JOBS NOW:**

Will provide up to \$370M to help employers offset the cost of hiring unemployed Albertans. The program pays employers 25% of an employee's salary, for up to 52 weeks for filling a vacant role or creating a new one. See <https://www.alberta.ca/alberta-jobs-now-program.aspx>.

**FEDERAL YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS STRATEGY (YESS):**

Ongoing funding programs to provide jobs, skill development, and wraparound supports for youth. See employer options at <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/funding/youth-employment-strategy.html>

3

**Participate in Alberta curriculum development in 2021-2023.**

Lend your expertise to contextualize and expand on curriculum options that align with employment prospects and required skills in your sector. See <https://www.alberta.ca/curriculum-development.aspx> for engagement opportunities.

## 4

***Join stakeholder collaborations to build networks that act on Opportunity Youth employment.*** Learn from them about the challenges, opportunities, and strategies for recruiting, training, mentoring, and working with OY. Adapt what you learn to fit your sector, community, work environment, and needs. Share tips, strategies, and stories of OY success with other employers. Leverage partnerships with youth-serving organizations, other institutions, and funders to offer collaborative opportunities for OY. Some starting points:

- **Calgary Employer Forum:**  
<https://calgaryemployerforum.com/>
- **Opportunity for All Youth Canada:**  
<https://opportunityforall youth.ca/coalition-employers/>

## 5

***Engage with Opportunity Youth to understand their workplace, training, and employment-related skill-building needs, preferences, and priorities*** within your sector. Include OY in workforce planning, including Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion work.

