



GREATER TORONTO, Canada

netWORKS

Key facts

netWORKS is a youth networking and mentoring initiative by United Way Greater Toronto, that aims to create opportunities for young people to establish professional connections needed to find meaningful employment.

Timeframe and funding	The programme started in 2015 with a completion date of 2025.
City population	5,928,000
Governing body	Toronto City Council (Toronto)
Link	netWorks - United Way Greater Toronto (unitedwaygt.org)

Main objectives

netWORKS was developed in response to research that showed that 85% of jobs are filled via networking and over 80,000 young people in the City of Toronto face barriers to developing the professional networks they need to succeed. netWORKS aims to:

- Help young people facing barriers to develop employment-focused networking and soft skills, meet new role models and expand professional networks.

Content and mode of delivery



In the netWORKS programme, mentors and mentees receive training, participate in networking sessions and have the opportunity to connect for individual networking or more structured mentoring. The programme participants are 18-29 year-olds who face barriers to employment.

The programme works with employers to engage experienced mentors who can offer guidance to the youth. In addition, the programme collaborates with local service delivery organizations to engage the youth in the programme and it offers real-world advice about recruitment, information about the corporate work environment, enhances their possibilities of finding meaningful employment and increases confidence. netWORKS also helps employers to mobilize and support young professional employees to become mentors and create positive volunteer experiences for them.

Donors to the United Way Greater Toronto Community Fund provided 520,000 Canadian dollars to the programme. Since 2015, netWORKS has hosted over 90 networking events across the Greater Toronto Area.

Stakeholders



The main stakeholders in the project are:

- United Way Greater Toronto
- Ten Thousand Coffees (a company that offers career development through professional networking and mentoring)

Key challenges, success factors & transferability



The programme has faced some challenges, including articulating the value of a network to youth who are new to the concept and building frontline agency staff capacity to support youth facing barriers to employment to engage in the programme. Other challenges include ensuring that the youth attend events and take the initiative to continue interactions with mentors beyond the networking events.

However, since 2015 the programme has given 1,048 participants access to 23 employer partners and 694 mentors. 95% of the participants indicated that they obtained a better understanding of the existing opportunities in specific companies. In addition, 96% of participants mentioned that they developed increased confidence in their networking abilities

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