

An Assessment of the Maine Youth Action Network's  
Summer 2020 Program:

# Gateway to Opportunity



This report was developed for The Opportunity Alliance's Maine Youth Action Network team by the Data Innovation Project. Portland, Maine, December 2020.

# Table of Contents

Executive Summary .....	3
Introduction .....	5
Methodology .....	7
Mid-program check in .....	8
Career workshop feedback.....	8
End of program survey .....	8
Findings .....	10
Impact of G2O on targeted knowledge, skills and perceptions.....	10
Effectiveness of career workshops .....	13
Community connection.....	15
Program structure .....	16
G2O in a Covid-19 world: the impact of remote programming.....	17
Results by geography: rural versus urban results .....	19
Cohort Comparison: Notable findings from a comparison of MYAN's G2O implementation versus 2017-19 data.....	22
Recommendations and Considerations .....	25
Conclusion.....	27
Appendix A. Details of Data Analysis .....	28
Appendix B. Sample Sizes.....	30
Appendix C. Theory of Change and Logic Model.....	32

## Executive Summary

Gateway to Opportunity, Maine's summer youth employment initiative developed by the Youth and Community Engagement team at the University of Southern Maine's Cutler Institute, connects high-school aged people with paid, work-based learning projects where they hone and develop 21st Century Skills. While the summer 2020 program brought unique challenges due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Maine Youth Action Network's 2020 program was grounded in a framework refined through four years of implementation with more than 120 youth, 30 Team Leaders, and 15 host sites across Maine. After serving as a program coordinator in 2019, MYAN independently ran G2O in 2020. To support its first summer leading G2O, MYAN contracted with the Data Innovation Project to assess the impact and effectiveness of the program, particularly given structural changes in 2020.

## Methodology

MYAN's 2020 program included 17 youth, four Team Leaders, four host sites and one college-aged program coordinator. Conducted 90% online, the six week summer program included training for Team Leaders and host sites, and work-based learning, skill development, team building, and career and employment training for youth and Team Leaders. The Data Innovation Project utilized a mixed-methods approach to collect qualitative and quantitative data from youth and Team Leaders, including a mid-program check in and an end of summer survey. The finding and recommendations shared are intended to support MYAN's expansion and refinement of the program moving forward.

## Key Findings

- Youth participants from MYAN's summer 2020 program reported improvements in all key 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills: communication, teamwork, problem solving and work readiness. In addition, they shared that involvement in G2O has clarified and improved their goals and aspirations for their education and career.
- Team Leaders indicated they are more confident in facilitation and supervisory roles, and that this summer's remote experience gave them the opportunity to learn to lead virtually.
- Both youth and Team Leaders reported that their involvement in G2O improved their self-initiative and made them more prepared for virtual workplaces and online learning in the future.

- Data indicate youth found the mock interviews, Black Lives Matter and Workplace Discrimination, and resume building and cover letters workshops the most helpful.
- As compared to Greater Portland youth, Bridgton youth reported greater change across all outcome areas as a result of their involvement in G2O. This preliminary comparison offers insight into the potential differences between these sites and will be helpful as the program expands.
- While conclusions related to comparative data from previous years are preliminary, results suggest that even virtually, MYAN is implementing G2O with fidelity; participants in 2020 are reporting many of the same results as those from the 2017-2019 cohort.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Despite being faced with structural challenges as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, MYAN's G2O program was implemented successfully, as demonstrated by the data presented in this report. As it considers refining the program, data from youth and Team Leaders suggest MYAN further clarify program goals and outcomes, allow for more time and structure around pre-program planning, and offer additional support around virtual engagement. Data collected on this summer's training, implementation, success and challenges provide a foundation from which MYAN can intentionally refine and adjust the program.

## Introduction

Based on national best practices from a highly successful summer youth employment initiative, Maine's Gateway to Opportunity (G2O) program was developed by the Youth and Community Engagement (YCE) team at the University of Southern Maine's Cutler Institute. G2O connects high-school aged people with paid, work-based learning projects where they hone and develop 21st Century Skills. Since 2016, the G2O model has supported project teams at 15 different host sites serving more than 120 youth and 30 Team Leaders. In 2019, the Maine Youth Action Network (MYAN) team at The Opportunity Alliance joined this effort as a program coordinator for two host sites. In 2020 MYAN independently ran G2O at four host sites across three Maine communities. Over the course of the six week summer program, 17 high school students, supervised by four college-aged Team Leaders and a part time college-aged Program Coordinator, were broken into four project teams and paired with one of the following community host sites:

### **Loon Echo Land Trust, Bridgton, Maine**

*Description:* The Loon Echo Land Trust project aimed to engage youth to raise awareness about the surrounding environment and what it means to the local community. Using Pondicherry Park in Bridgton as a resource and case study, the team interviewed peers and local community leaders, planned, researched, and produced a promotional film about how outdoor resources benefit individuals and community.

### **City of Portland Public Health Division, Portland, Maine**

*Description:* The City of Portland Public Health Division team created a Commercial Tobacco Prevention PSA video intended to be aired in cinemas in Portland, South Portland, and Westbrook. While simultaneously learning about the field of public health, youth participants supported the filming, editing, design, and content for the PSA.

### **Sustainability Office for the City of South Portland, South Portland, Maine**

*Description:* The Sustainability Office worked with its G2O team on creative story telling through the lens of climate change. Working with the staff at the City of South Portland, the team worked to build awareness and understanding of local climate risks, hazards, and solutions, as well as the lived experiences of residents in South Portland. Collectively, the team chose to tell their stories using video and dialogue, bringing voice, perspective and lived experiences to the work being done to address the intersections of climate change and racial injustice.

### **SoPo Unite, South Portland, Maine**

*Description:* A South Portland High School initiative, the G2O team aimed to create a series of recommendations to highlight the possibilities and employment opportunities available to young people as alternative career pathways. Using research and a short film, the team offered recommendations and made connections for decision makers and organizational staff to consider implementing more employment and career opportunities at the local and school level, as a holistic approach to substance use prevention work.

Prior to the start of programming, Team Leaders participated in 40 hours of virtual training. Host site supervisors received three hours of training and targeted technical assistance. Working 30 hours a week, 90% of which was remote, project teams collaborated with their host site supervisors to develop, implement and complete their project. In addition to work-based learning, young people and Team Leaders participated in weekly career workshops and team building activities to develop career and employment skills.

While key program strategies and intended outcomes were consistent with years past, MYAN's 2020 programming had a number of structural changes, a result of both the Covid-19 pandemic and the fact that MYAN was implementing G2O in 2020 summer without the training and technical assistance that was previously provided by YCE. Structural changes included: a shifted programming calendar; out-of-school recruitment; virtual training, onboarding, and career workshops; blended virtual and in-person programming and project work; reduced access to daily lunch during programming for youth; and, geographic spread. To track the success of its efforts and evaluate the potential impact of these changes, MYAN contracted with the Data Innovation Project for data collection, analysis and reporting. This report synthesizes the results of data collected during MYAN's summer 2020 G2O program and provides recommendations and considerations moving forward.

## Methodology

Since G2O's launch in 2016, the Data Innovation Project (DIP) has served as the evaluation partner, supporting the program's performance measurement, evaluation and continuous quality improvement efforts. While the G2O program has four years of evidence demonstrating its impact, MYAN recognized the need to continue conducting evaluation efforts to capture the extent to which structural changes impacted both the processes and outcomes of the 2020 program, and to inform continuous program improvement. The following three questions drove the data collection efforts for this project:

1. To what extent does MYAN's 2020 program impact outcomes for youth and Team Leaders?
  - a. Given the structural and operational changes in 2020, how do these results compare to previous years?
2. To what extent do geography and community opportunities impact program success (e.g. outcomes in Portland/South Portland versus Bridgton)?
3. To what extent do changes in programming due to COVID-19 impact outcomes?
  - a. How successful are virtual career workshops at building professional and workplace skills for young people?

While the data collection methodology was based in protocols that were established in previous years, the DIP worked collaboratively with MYAN staff to modify tools and processes to address these specific research questions. Youth participants and Team Leaders participated in data collection activities at two points in the summer: mid-way through the 6-week program and in the closing week.

### DATA COLLECTION TOOLS AND SAMPLE SIZES

	Mid-program feedback	End of program survey
<b>Youth Participants</b> <i>17 total</i>	12 Zoom focus group	17
<b>Team Leaders</b> <i>4 total</i>	3 Online survey	4

## Mid-program check in

For the mid-program check in, youth participated in a Zoom focus group and Team Leaders were asked to complete an online survey to provide feedback.

### YOUTH

Twelve of the 17 youth (71%) from the four teams participated in one of three Zoom focus groups facilitated by DIP staff. After sharing information and gathering consent for the process, youth were guided through a series of open-ended questions to solicit feedback on their experience with the first half of the program. Live polling was used to gather feedback on career workshops.

### TEAM LEADERS

Team Leaders were asked to complete an online survey to reflect on their experience with the program and provide feedback on career workshops. Three of the four Team Leaders (75%) completed the survey.

## Career workshop feedback

Youth and Team Leaders were asked to provide feedback on the six virtual career workshops at two separate points in the summer; data on workshops from weeks one through three were collected during the mid-program check in. Data on workshops from weeks four through six were collected in the end of program survey. Using a four-point Likert scale, participants were asked to rate each workshop thinking about how much they agreed that the content from the workshop mattered to their long term academic or career path. While workshops were primarily intended to benefit youth, Team Leaders also provided feedback.

## End of program survey

Both youth and Team Leaders were asked to complete an end of program online survey<sup>1</sup> that captures changes in knowledge, skills and perceptions of key outcomes the G2O program hopes to impact. Specific questions were included on the survey to gauge the extent to which structural changes to G2O, both as it transitioned to leadership through MYAN and utilized primarily virtual programming, impacted documented outcomes. Surveys were designed and revised with questions and content relevant to each group, with some overlap between groups to allow for comparisons. The following content was addressed:

- Post-pre retrospective on skill development and personal growth
- Attitudes, beliefs and aspirations about education, career, and community

---

<sup>1</sup> See the Appendix for more details on data analysis from this tool.

- Feedback on Team Leaders and host site supervisors
- Program successes and challenges
- Feedback on G2O training, facilitation, structure and organization

## YOUTH

All 17 youth enrolled in the program started the end of program survey, with an 88% completion rate. The majority of participants (82% or 14 youth) identified as female. Eighteen percent (three youth) identified as male. Of the 15 youth who reported the primary language spoken in their home, 10 (67%) said English and one youth each (7%) reported speaking the following: Arabic; French; Kinyarwanda; Portuguese; and English and French.

Forty-seven percent (eight youth) had just graduated high school, 29% (five) were rising seniors and 23% (four) were rising juniors. Youth came from five high schools: 76% (13 youth) in the greater Portland-area and 24% (four) in the Bridgton-area.

### HIGH SCHOOLS OF YOUTH PARTICIPANTS

South Portland High School	7 (41%)
Portland High School	4 (24%)
Casco Bay High School	2 (12%)
<i>Bridgton-area</i> Lakes Region High School Sacopee Valley High School or Fryeburg Academy	4 (24%)

## TEAM LEADERS

All four Team Leaders (100%) completed the end of program survey via the SurveyMonkey.com platform. All Team Leaders identified as female. All reported being enrolled in college, two reporting they are rising juniors, one a rising sophomore and one a rising senior. Three of the Team Leaders reported English is the primary language spoken in their home. One said both English and Somali are spoken in their home.

## Findings

The following presents a synthesis and analysis of the 2020 data considering both the research questions and intended outcomes of the program, as detailed in the program logic model.<sup>2</sup>

Findings are shared in the following sections:

- Impact of G2O on knowledge, skills and perceptions
- Effectiveness of career workshops
- Community connection
- Feedback on program structure
- Impact of COVID-19 on programming
- Results by geography

### Impact of G2O on targeted knowledge, skills and perceptions

#### YOUTH RESULTS

MYAN G2O youth participants reported increases in knowledge and skills in 15 of 16 statements and all four domains related to the four 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills of communication, problem-solving, teamwork and work readiness. As Figure 1 shows, while youth reported improvements in all areas, they reported the greatest increases in problem solving and communication, with a 0.7 and 0.6 point increase respectively from pre to post programming.

“G2O has helped me become more comfortable in speaking to others my age, and professionals. It has also helped me improve my online communication skills.”

**2020 YOUTH PARTICIPANT**

**Figure 1**

Youth reported that because of their involvement in G2O they **improved in all key 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills**  
Pre to post program averages



<sup>2</sup> See Appendix C.

Qualitative and quantitative data indicate that youth used the skills and confidence they gained communication, particularly public speaking and speaking in a group, to improve their problem solving skills. The vast majority of youth (93%) reported that because of their involvement in G2O, they see how these 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills could help them in the workplace. Eighty-seven percent reported they now have clearer goals and aspirations for their education and career, and 93% said G2O showed them more about opportunities in Maine to attend college or access training after high school. Finally, 87% reported that because of G2O they had earnings or savings to contribute to their family's household expenses.

### TEAM LEADER RESULTS

Results from the end of summer survey indicate the four Team Leaders gained supervisory and facilitation skills and experience in the 2020 G2O program. While Team Leaders reported increases in all measured areas, the greatest increase, a change of 1.3 points pre to post, was in their likelihood to look for strengths in people. Team Leaders reported that because of G2O they are better at providing structure to groups, leading team building activities, learning from people younger than them, and helping teams come to decisions. In addition, Team Leaders overwhelmingly reported that as a result of participating in G2O they now understand how 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills could help in the workplace and that they have gained these needed skills in G2O. The majority of Team Leaders reported that their participation in G2O helped clarify their goals and aspirations for their education and career.

**“I have learned to observe a group, and recognize what the group dynamics are, and how to respond to that as a facilitator.”**

**2020 TEAM LEADER**

When asked to share highlights or successes from their experience working as a Team Leader for the G2O program, Team Leaders commented on the pride they felt from working with their teams of young people; “They are passionate, motivated, and hard-working, and it was such an honor to get to help lead them through a project,” shared one Team Leader. Another said a highlight was hearing the youth say they were proud of what they had learned. Another commented on hearing the youth talk with passion about their project topic: “It fostered a great conversation where everyone was challenging themselves to think critically at the world.” The following are other highlights shared by Team Leaders that demonstrate the impact of the program on facilitation and supervision:

- “Learning how to facilitate meaningful conversations with disengaged youth over Zoom as well as coming up with ways to re-engage them.”

- "...learning how to effectively take direction from two different sources (MYAN and my host site) and proceed accordingly with a group of youth participants. It went from overwhelming to exciting in a matter of weeks and I felt more secure in my leadership skills."

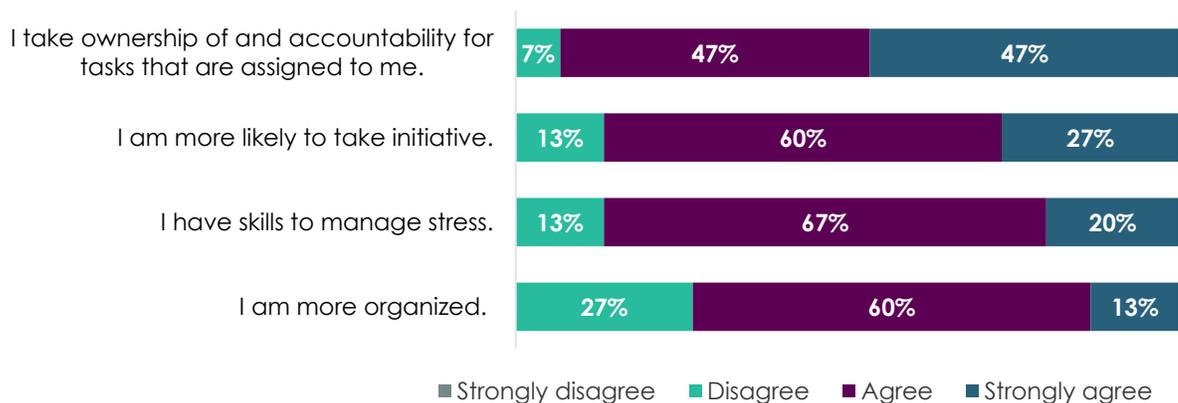
### Program impact on self-management skills

In an attempt to measure the impact of the program on the ability of youth participants and Team Leaders to take initiative and self-manage, the end of program survey asked four questions about related skills. Youth responses show the majority of responding participants, over 70%, reported that as a result of participating in G2O, they have improved their self-management skills, as visualized in Figure 2. Responses indicate G2O had the greatest impact on youth's initiative or self-motivation, with 93% reporting G2O improved these skills. While still a positive finding, G2O was less effective at building organizational skills in youth.

**Figure 2**

## Youth participants attributed **improved self-management skills** to G2O

*Youth ratings of skill development in G2O*



As with youth, data from Team Leaders indicates that G2O had the greatest impact on initiative or self-motivation; 100% of Team Leaders (four out of four) agreed or strongly agreed that they take ownership of and accountability for tasks that are assigned to them and are more likely to take initiative because of their participation in G2O. All four Team Leaders reported they are more organized because of G2O. Three of the four agreed or strongly agreed that because of G2O that have the skills to manage stress, with one disagreeing with this statement.

## Effectiveness of career workshops

Youth and Team Leaders participated in six virtual career workshops over the course of the summer. While data about the impact of the workshops were collected from both groups, career workshops were primarily intended to impact youth participants. Participants were asked to provide feedback on the career workshops reflecting on the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that the content from the workshop mattered for their long-term academic or career path.

As shown below in Figure 3, more than 70% of youth agreed or strongly agreed that all workshop content mattered for their long term academic or career path. Data indicate youth found the mock interview and Black Lives Matter and discrimination in the workplace workshop content the most helpful. Youth reported the college readiness workshop contained the least relevant content.

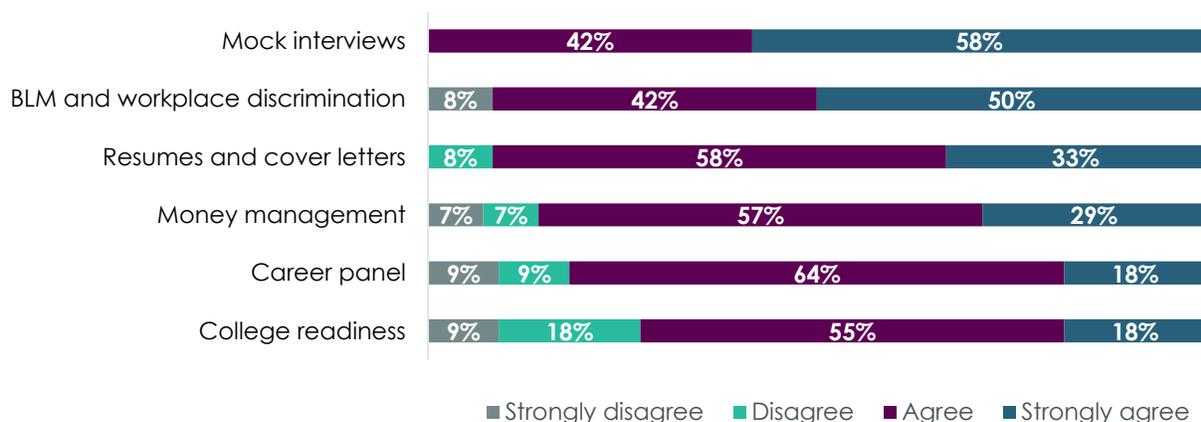
## SCHEDULE OF CAREER WORKSHOPS

- Week One**  
College readiness
- Week Two**  
Resume and cover letters
- Week Three**  
Career panel  
Mock interviews
- Week Four**  
Money management
- Week Five**  
Black Lives Matter and workplace discrimination

**Figure 3**

## Youth rated mock interviews and BLM workshops the most useful

*Applicability of career workshops to youth*



When asked to provide feedback on the workshops, youth reported they are most likely to use skills from the resume building and mock interview workshops; one young person said they used the resume created in G2O to apply for a job. Another said they "never had had a real resume or talked about a resume" until this workshop. While not the primary audience for the workshops, three Team Leaders also said they could imagine using skills from the resume building workshop

in the future. Although on average Team Leaders rated the mock interview workshop low, two said they could see themselves using skills learned from this workshop. One said it taught them how to talk about their college experiences in an interview and another shared that it was “super helpful to be on the other side of” an interview. While the Black Lives Matter and

**“I had never done a real interview. Nice to see that before going to the real world.”**  
**2020 YOUTH PARTICIPANT**

workplace discrimination workshop was rated high, neither youth nor Team Leaders commented on gaining specific useable skills. Comments indicated content in the resume building and mock interview workshops offered more tangible, skill-building activities.

In sharing more general feedback, one young person suggested that small groups in workshops be based on what participants hope to learn from the topic: “Most of the workshops did not help me because they did not apply to me. Perhaps sending out a short survey before workshops, and grouping people based on what information they are looking to learn.”

Considering the virtual context, two young people thought the guest speakers had not prepared enough material to keep the youth engaged. As one shared, “They were coming into it expecting us to have questions and...we were expecting them to very much lead the group with activities.” When asked if they believed the career workshops were a good use of their team’s time, all four responded, two that they strongly agreed and two that they agreed. When asked if the career workshops were engaging, 67% of responding youth said yes. While still the majority, this is a lower positive response compared to ratings of similar content. It may be important for MYAN to consider the extent to which virtual learning impacts the effectiveness of career workshops and use these comments to inform preparation with guest speakers.

## Community connection

In addition to building 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills and workplace competencies, MYAN's G2O program intended to enhance youth and Team Leaders' connection to community. When youth and

**"I want to be able to create opportunities for other community members that are both enjoyable and useful to them."**

**2020 YOUTH PARTICIPANT**

Team Leaders were asked if participating in G2O helped them think about new ways to contribute to community, the majority said yes: ten (71%) of the 14 youth respondents and three of four Team Leaders said yes. Three youth (21%) and one Team Leaders said *I'm not sure*, and one youth (7%) said *no*. Youth shared the following responses about how their experience in G2O built their connection to and understanding of their community:

- "Be more involved because I had no idea about Loon Echo."
- "It showed a bunch of community members that are willing to reach out to youth."
- "I became more educated on how I was impacted and can raise awareness."

The one Team Leader who said they were not sure if G2O built their connection to community shared, "The program does not necessarily make me think of new ways to contribute, but it does highlight the need for youth engagement and community building." Team Leaders who said yes shared that G2O:

- Helped them find "new areas and strategies to connect youth and myself to issues surrounding minorities."
- "made me think more creatively about solutions to the problems in society that are meaningful to youth."
- "By completing this project in my community I was able to look at it through a lens I normally have not looked through. As a group, we noticed areas that needed improvement in our community in a way none of us had really considered before and were all motivated to create a project surrounding that."

In addition, 93% of youth reported that because of G2O, they learned about more post-secondary opportunities in their home state of Maine. In sharing feedback at the mid-program check in, a number of youth shared that the most impactful things they had learned were project-specific and connected to their community, indicating that G2O raised their awareness of local issues.

## Program structure

As both recipients of the program and staff, Team Leaders were asked to weigh in on a variety of structural and logistical aspects of programming. Team Leaders rated coordination and connection with their host sites high. All four strongly agreed they felt supported and welcome by their host site. The three responding Team Leaders strongly agreed that they would recommend working with their host site again and all four agreed their host site was grateful for the work they were doing. When sharing comments about their host sites, all Team Leaders praised their sites. They highlighted the following traits in host site supervisors:

- Supportive (four responses): "My host site was fantastic. They were super supportive and have done a lot to contribute to the success of our project.
- Flexible (two responses)
- Helpful: "We had two check in meetings a week, which were helpful in grounding me in the work. They really allowed me to take initiative in my own way, rather than pushing certain techniques or view points onto me. I appreciate them very much!"

One provided this feedback: "In retrospect I wish I got a full schedule of when [my host site supervisor] was available all summer to plan when she would join zoom meetings."

While Team Leaders generally reported they received effective supervision and knew who to go to with questions, they were less likely to agree that pre-program training made them feel prepared to be a Team Leader. Overall, two agreed and two disagreed that G2O felt well organized. As MYAN continues to refine the organizational structures of G2O under their leadership – particularly if programming continues online – this type of process-centered data will continue to be important to collect and monitor.

## G2O in a Covid-19 world: the impact of remote programming

Both youth and Team Leaders provided feedback and insight into the impact of remote learning on the experience of summer programming. Logistically, youth reported they were prepared for online learning. When asked if they had the tools and resources they needed to be successful working virtually (such as reliable internet, a computer, tablet or smart phone, functioning microphone and webcam, quiet workspace) 100% of the 14 responding youth said yes. At the mid-point check in, one of the Team Leaders said that the program would be improved by “reliable Wifi and devices to access the internet.” It is unclear if this was in reference to the Team Leader’s access to internet or their team members’. G2O primarily used Zoom and Google Classrooms for their virtual programming; the majority of youth (87%) and Team Leaders (three out of four) agreed these platforms were easy to use.

According to program staff, about 90% of 2020 programming was online. Recognizing that in-person work was limited due to Covid-19, youth were asked if they thought the program had a good balance of independent offline work and real-time virtual work sessions. Of the 14 respondents, 12 (86%) said yes, they thought it was a good balance. Two (14%) said no, one of whom commented it was not a good balance because “most of us are not used to virtual work, so it was challenging.” The other shared, “Personally, I wish we were able to do some more in person work. The few days we did were much more productive and enjoyable. I think if we had a few more in person days it would've been a good balance.”

Although 87% of youth agreed that their Team Leader facilitated engaging online work sessions, two strongly disagreed with this statement. As is discussed more in detail in the section on career workshops, two youth participants felt that guest speakers were not adequately prepared to facilitate the online workshops. Even with limited in-person programming, 87% of youth reported they felt connected to their Team Leader and 80% said they felt connected to their peers or teammates. All Team Leaders (four of four) agreed or strongly agreed that they felt connected to other Team Leaders and youth on their project team.

The majority of youth (87%) and Team Leaders (100%) agreed that as a result of participating in G2O they feel more prepared for a virtual workplace environment and for online learning in the future. As one youth shared, “I think the biggest take away this summer has been [the opportunity] to collaborate through an online workspace.” Another young person provided specific examples for the ways in which G2O’s remote engagement supported their development of what they called Zoom

**The majority of youth and Team Leaders reported that as a result of participating in G2O they feel more prepared for a virtual workplace environment and for online learning.**

*etiquette*: “We know in the future we will use Zoom more commonly and more often. It’s something I learned that is so important...things like muting yourself, opening the camera when necessary, addressing people with a certain tone or resaying things.”

This summer’s remote programming provided Team Leaders a unique opportunity to build supervisory and facilitation skills in an online environment. As one Team Leader shared on the mid-program survey, the most impactful thing they had learned was “how to facilitate meaningful conversations with youth that do not want to talk or show their face over Zoom.” MYAN’s decision to employ a Team Leader coordinator likely supported these outcomes as this staff person was specifically charged with building the connection and collaboration between Team Leaders to support shared learning and skill development.

While the majority of participants were experiencing G2O for the first time, two youth were part of G2O in 2019. With their knowledge of what more in-person programming looked like, they provided some unique feedback on the shifted programming model. “[Zoom calls] can be awkward and it’s not interesting. It’s boring... I do better in person.” They reflected that although last year they had to wake up earlier to make sure they arrived on site on time, they were energized whereas this year they found it harder to be on time.

## Results by geography: rural versus urban results

For the first time ever and as result of years of collaboration and outreach, the G2O project was able to reach a more rural area of the state with the Loon Echo Land Trust in Bridgton, Maine. Although the numbers are small, the program expansion allowed for some data comparisons between outcomes at the Bridgton and Greater Portland sites, which are located in South Portland and Portland.

## Demographics

The Bridgton area G2O team was made up of **four** young people from three different high schools. Two were rising juniors, one a rising senior and one had just graduated. Three identified as female and one as male. All reported that English was the primary language spoken in their home. In comparison, the **eleven** youth from Portland and South Portland were a part of three project teams and represented three high schools. Over half (55%) had just graduated from high school, three (27%) were rising seniors and two (18%) were rising juniors. Nine (82%) identified as female and two (18%) as male. Of the ten who shared their home language, five (50%) said English was the primary language spoken in their home. The other five said the primary language(s) were Arabic, French, Kinyarwanda, Portuguese, and English and French.

## Findings

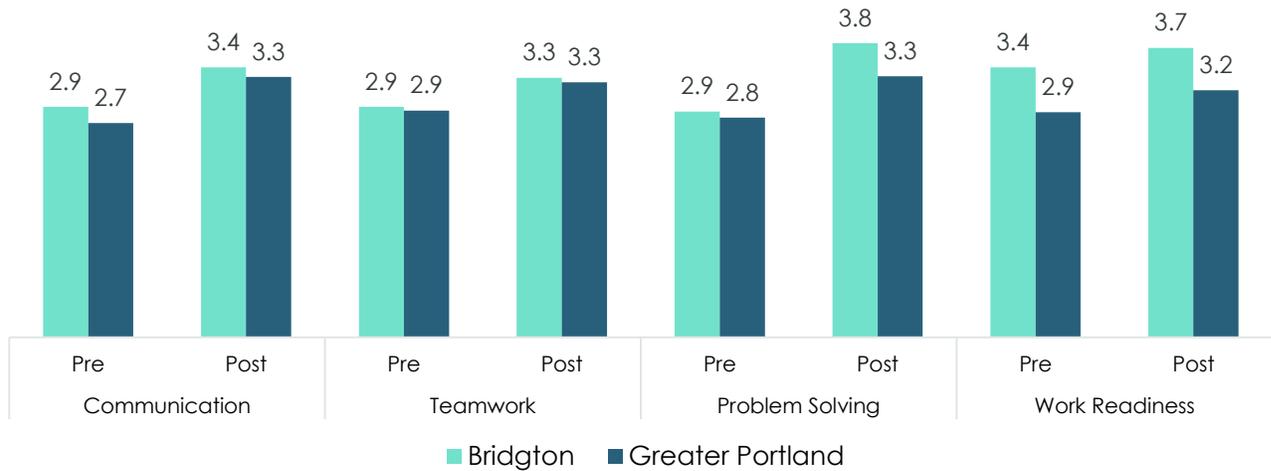
Analysis of youth self-reflection data on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills before and after their involvement in G2O shows that the Bridgton-area youth both entered and exited the program slightly higher in the measured domains. Figure 4 compares the average pre and post scores of the four 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skill domains: communication, teamwork, problem solving and work readiness. While the differences between the two groups were small in the communication and teamwork domains, Bridgton youth reported a greater increase in problem solving skills as a result of their involvement in G2O (0.9 point gain versus 0.5). While the point change pre to post in the work readiness domain was similar (both groups increased 0.3 points), Bridgton youth self-reported they entered the program more confident than Greater Portland youth in their work readiness skills; Bridgton youth rated their pre skills an average of 3.4 compared to 2.9 for youth in Greater Portland.

*When considering this analysis, it is important to keep in mind the sample size: four youth from Bridgton and 11 from Greater Portland are included in this analysis. Such a small sample size does not allow for generalizability, but rather offers initial insight into potential differences and similarities between groups.*

**Figure 4**

**Bridgton youth entered and exited the program with slightly higher scores on 21st Century Skills**

*A comparison of pre-post program data between groups*



As compared to Greater Portland youth, Bridgton youth reported more positive changes across all outcome areas as a result of their involvement in G2O, from the impact of G2O on career goals and workplace skills, to self-management skills like managing stress and taking initiative, to the experience and lessons learned around remote programming. Figure 5 details the statements with the greatest differences between the two groups, with Bridgton reporting higher averages than Greater Portland youth.

**Figure 5**

**As a result of participating in G2O this summer...**

*Likert scale weighted averages, 1=strongly disagree, 4=strongly agree*

	<b>Bridgton</b> n=4	<b>Greater Portland</b> n=11
a. I feel more prepared for online learning in the future.	4.0	2.7
b. I have skills to manage stress.	3.8	2.8
c. I felt connected to my Team Leader.	4.0	3.2
d. I feel more prepared for a virtual workplace environment.	3.8	3.0

Bridgton youth consistently rated items higher than Greater Portland youth, with the exception of the reported impact of G2O on goals and aspirations for education; Greater Portland youth

reported G2O had a larger impact on their clarity for educational goals and aspirations than Bridgton youth, an average of 3.45 compared to 3.25 respectively.

Another notable difference between the two groups was the impact G2O had on their perceived connection to community. All four Bridgton youth said G2O helped them think about new ways to contribute to community, compared to six of the ten (60%) responding Greater Portland youth. Three Portland youth said they were not sure (30%) and one said no, G2O did not help them think about new ways to contribute to community. Comments from youth suggest that the project at Loon Echo Land Trust, the Bridgton-area host site, provided youth a direct opportunity to learn about, support, and connect with a resource in their community they may not have otherwise known existed.

Recognizing that the sample size in this comparison is small, data indicate differences in both incoming characteristics and outcomes when comparing G2O youth from Bridgton and Greater Portland. On average, Bridgton youth rated their pre-program skills, knowledge and perceptions higher than Greater Portland youth and self-reported greater gains. While the data is not robust enough to make any conclusion, it may be important to use data from future years to determine the driver for these differences. Among other variables, possibilities include the make-up and demographics of youth, skills and experience of Team Leaders, and host site placement.

## Cohort Comparison: Notable findings from a comparison of MYAN's G2O implementation versus 2017-19 data

Since 2017, the Data Innovation Project has been collecting data for G2O. In addition to looking for potential differences between urban and rural youth participants, data from summer 2020 programming allowed the evaluation to compare the outcomes from 2020 to those from previous years of implementation (2017-2019).

Demographically, the two cohorts of youth were different. In 2020, 80% of the participants (14 youth) were female compared to 58% (56 youth) of the 96 youth participants in 2017-2019. In 2020, 47% of the MYAN participants (8 youth) had graduated high school compared to 13% in 2017-2019. Finally, the majority of responding 2020 participants (67% or 10 youth) reported the primary language spoke in their home is English. From 2017-2019, 57 youth shared a primary language, with 30% reported speaking Somali, 25% Arabic and 18% English.

### YOUTH

#### *21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills*

The impact of G2O on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skill development was similar for both cohorts of youth (those from summer 2020 and summers 2017-2019). As illustrated in Figure 5, both cohorts of youth reported improvements in all areas, with the greatest changes in the domains of communication and problem solving.<sup>3</sup> The only noticeable difference between the two datasets is in the teamwork domain; data on MYAN's 2020 participants indicates youth both started the program and ended it with lower scores. However, the change pre to post on both groups was similar; 2017-2019 data increased 0.43 points pre to post on the teamwork scale and 2020 MYAN data increased 0.36 points. The results within the teamwork domain are interesting considering that MYAN's G2O program was 90% remote and opportunities for youth to develop in-person teamwork skills were limited.

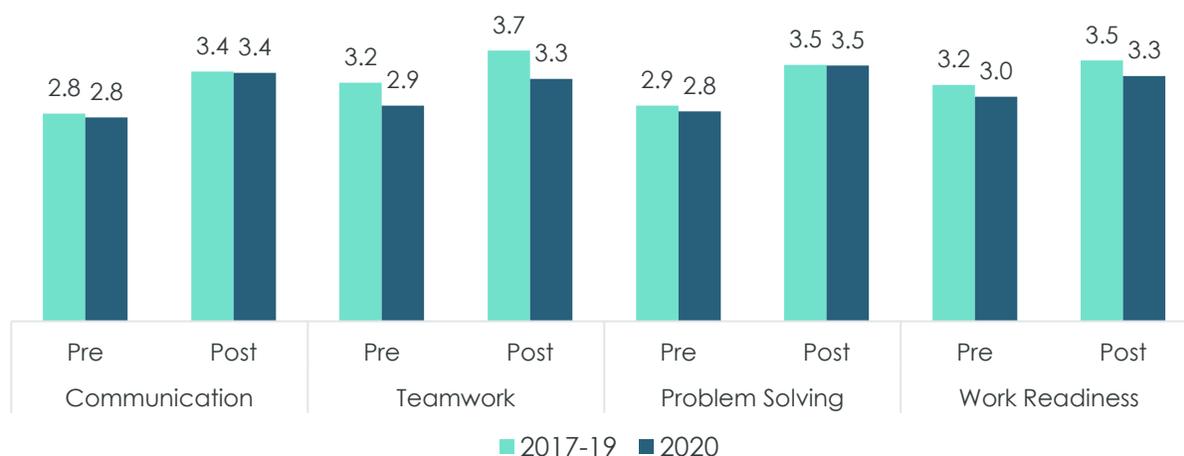
---

<sup>3</sup> These domain subscales have been calculated by averaging the pre and post data from four skill-specific items.

Figure 6

## MYAN's 2020 G2O 21st Century Skill development closely aligned with 2017-2019 data

Comparison of 21st Century Skill data from two datasets



Data from the past three years of G2O programming demonstrate that when implemented with fidelity, the program has a positive impact on the key 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills of communication, teamwork, problem solving and work readiness. This preliminary analysis indicates that despite the noted demographic differences, MYAN implemented the program in a way that led to consistent results in these areas of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skill building.

### Impact on career skills and education aspirations

While outcomes on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skill development were similar, comparing data from these two datasets on other programmatic outcomes reveal some differences. As compared to the 2017-2019 cohort, 2020 G2O participants were more likely to report that because of G2O they gained skills that will help them in their future career; 72% of youth from 2017-2019 agreed with the statement, "As a result of participating in G2O I have gained skills that will help me in my future career" compared to 93% of 2020 youth. However, a larger percentage of 2017-2019 youth reported that they had clearer goals and aspirations for their education and career. While both groups were relatively positive in these measures, the earlier cohorts were *more* positive, as indicated by their stronger level of agreement with the statements. Again, it is important to note the sample sizes in comparison, but these preliminary findings point toward areas of future focus to determine the extent to which changes in programming, particularly program content, impact these specific outcomes.

## TEAM LEADERS

When compared to data from 2017-2019, a closer look at the retrospective post-pre measures reveal 2020 MYAN Team Leaders both entered and exited the program with different skills and strengths, as shown in Figure 7.<sup>4</sup> In 2020, Team Leaders reported a 1.3 point increase in their confidence to look for strengths in people after G2O. In comparison, this was 2017-2019 Team Leaders' area of least change, only reporting a 0.3 point increase. In five of the seven areas, MYAN Team Leaders both rated their pre-program skills lower and reported greater overall change when compared to the 2017-2019 Team Leader data.

**Figure 7**

### Team Leaders in MYAN's 2020 G2O reported different skills and strengths as compared to 2017-2019 Team Leader data

*Likert scale weighted averages, 1=strongly disagree, 4=strongly agree*

		<b>Before G2O</b>	<b>After G2O</b>	Change
a. I look for strengths in people.	MYAN	2.8	4.0	1.3
	2017-19	3.5	3.7	0.3
b. I am good at providing structure to groups I work with.	MYAN	2.8	3.8	1.0
	2017-19	3.1	3.7	0.6
c. I am comfortable leading team building activities.	MYAN	2.8	3.8	1.0
	2017-19	3.0	3.6	0.6
d. I am open to learning from youth in my team (people younger than me).	MYAN	3.0	4.0	1.0
	2017-19	3.3	3.7	0.4
e. I am good at helping team members come to decisions.	MYAN	3.0	4.0	1.0
	2017-19	3.0	3.6	0.6
f. I provide good guidance and support to those I supervise.	MYAN	2.8	3.3	0.5
	2017-19	3.2	3.7	0.5
g. I am confident working through challenging group dynamics.	MYAN	2.8	3.3	0.5
	2017-19	2.7	3.5	0.8

Although the small sample size in 2020 must be considered (MYAN's 2020 program only had four Team Leaders compared to 22 in the 2017-2019 cohort) these differences are interesting to note and should continue to be compared to determine what is driving these differences.

<sup>4</sup> Because of the small sample of 2020 Team Leaders, the retrospective post-pre data is the only data set that allows for comparison to the 2017-2019 cohort of team leaders.

## Recommendations and Considerations

Both youth and Team Leaders offered challenges and opportunities for consideration as MYAN continues to build the program. The following considerations are based in qualitative and quantitative data collected over the course of the summer.

### **Clarify program goals and outcomes.**

Mid-program feedback revealed some confusion from youth about the intention of the program. While Team Leaders understood the importance of team building in the larger context of the program - all four agreed that the full-group team building activities were an important part of G2O - youth from different teams expressed confusion about why, as a part of a summer job, they were doing so many team building activities. It became clear, and was repeated in some feedback in the end of year survey, that some youth signed up for G2O as a summer job and were not looking for or expecting additional skill building. As one shared, they were not in G2O to “gain skills. I saw it as a job that seemed easier than a normal job and would just be done in the summer. I didn’t come into this hoping to grow as a person from it. I just saw it as a paycheck.” Others wished they had fewer team building activities so they had more time to work on their project. The survey provides additional insight; while 80% of youth reported they felt connected to their teammates, 20% (three youth) did not.

Explicitly sharing the larger goals and outcomes of the program prior to enrolling participants will align expectations and likely improve participant experience. This year’s misalignment may be the result of out-of-school recruitment due to Covid-19. Regardless, MYAN should consider reviewing and, as needed, editing marketing documents and job descriptions for youth to explicitly outline the importance of team building and skill building activities and how they contribute to the larger goals of the program. In addition to aligning expectations, this will likely also ensure the program is attracting the youth who will most benefit and be interested and engaged in these efforts.

### **Consider more in-depth project planning.**

Two Team Leaders shared that they wished they had more time and structure to plan the six week summer term, including getting more familiar with project topics and clear with goals. As one shared, “Currently, there’s a stress of getting things done. If I had known more of the guidelines for the project, it would have been a lot better...rather than cramming all at once.” The other said, “It would be great if a lot of the planning for the bones and ideas of the project could be done before the students join, so that there is

more structure and less confusion and anxiety." One commented that they felt like they were learning about their project topic alongside the youth and so they were not able to adequately answer questions.

Historically, teams have created and defined end products or projects – to some extent – once the program has started. This feedback from Team Leaders, coupled with feedback from host sites from previous years, suggests that the program may be stronger if the end goal or products for each team are more clearly defined prior to the start of the summer. This would allow Team Leaders time to get familiar with the specific topic and, potentially, address a host sites desire for a more concrete and useable end product.

### **Offer additional support around virtual programming.**

While youth and Team Leaders reported they had the tools and resources they needed to be successful working virtually and generally reported positive experiences with the virtual learning experience, individuals from both groups also shared concerns and challenges. As previously reported, two youth who had participated in G2O last year provided an interesting reflection on the impact of virtual programming on engagement. Two Team Leaders echoed their sentiment that it was hard to stay engaged and energized. As one shared, "The Zoom burnout was very real. Keeping energy up on some of those calls was sometimes impossible." Career workshops posed additional challenges. For the majority of young people, this summer's programming may have been their first intensive virtual learning experience. MYAN's intention to build and support participants' self-motivation and initiative will contribute to successful online learning experiences. This will be interesting data to continue to track as young people become more comfortable with online learning.

If G2O is remote in 2021, both youth and Team Leaders will likely come into the program with much more experience in online learning. Regardless, data indicate both groups would benefit from more intentional training and support on how to stay engaged and energized when connecting virtually. As schools across the country transition to remote learning, this topic will likely generates a significant amount of research that MYAN staff can subsequently tap for ideas.

## Conclusion

MYAN's 2020 G2O programming was unique in many ways: in its first year independently leading G2O, the program expanded beyond the Greater Portland community into rural Bridgton. In March of 2020, just months before the start of the program, a global pandemic forced the staff to transition the majority of the programming online, shifting everything from the Team Leader training to guest speakers at career workshops onto virtual platforms. While MYAN had a solid program foundation from YCE's four years of implementation and MYAN's role as program coordinator for two sites in 2019, 2020 offered new challenges and opportunities. Nonetheless, the program evaluation suggests that G2O 2020 was implemented in such a way that youth participants and Team Leaders saw positive results. As measured by qualitative and quantitative data collected over the course of the summer, youth and Team Leaders gained skills and experiences that will positively impact their future education and careers. Albeit a small sample, the analysis comparing results of project teams in Greater Portland and Bridgton reveals interesting differences that can be further explored as more data becomes available. As MYAN considers the future of G2O, the feedback and data from participants offer opportunities for refining, expanding, and continuing efforts that have led to these successes in its first year.

# Appendix A. Details of Data Analysis

## End of program survey data analysis

In addition to the more traditional Likert scale of agreement where participants rate how much they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements using a four-point scale, youth and Team Leader end of program surveys included a retrospective post-pre. On the retrospective post-pre, participants were directed to read each statement and respond with two scores, the first thinking about their confidence with the statement before G2O and the second thinking about their confidence with the statement after G2O. Responses to statements are analyzed as averages pre and post to look for changes that may have occurred because of participation in G2O. Results of these analyses are detailed in the findings section.

## Youth: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills and Strengths

In an attempt to capture the impact of the program on participants' skills and strengths in key target areas, youth were asked to rate four sets of four statements, 16 total, related to the following 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills: communications, teamwork, problem solving and work readiness<sup>5</sup>. Responses to statements were analyzed both individually and as a scale or domain. A communication scale, for example, was computed by combining each of the four statements related to communication to provide an overall communication score.

## Results by geography

At times, weighted averages are used to compare results for youth from the Bridgton area to youth from the Greater Portland area. The end of program survey used a four-point Likert scale. Responses are weighted; 1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *agree* and 4 = *strongly agree*. Weighted averages for each question, by group, are computed on Likert scale questions by adding the weights of all answer choices and dividing by the response count. So if three people selected *agree* and one person selected *strongly agree* the weighted average would be 3.25. In reviewing the data and making conclusions, it is important to keep in mind the sample size: four youth from Bridgton and 11 from Greater Portland. Such a small sample size does not allow for generalizability, but rather offers initial insight into potential differences and similarities between groups.

---

<sup>5</sup> Not all participants answered all questions. The appendix includes the sample size for each question. Only those who responded to both the pre and post on questions in the retrospective post-pre are included in the analysis of that question. Only those who responded to all questions in the set are included in the scaled analysis of that topic area.

### *Cohort Comparison*

MYAN's G2O summer 2020 was the fifth year the program was implemented in the state. At the time of this report, the Data Innovation Project was compiling a summative data analysis that reviews the results of data from summers 2017, 2018, and 2019. In an attempt to ascertain the extent to which MYAN's program maintained the fidelity of original programming, this section compares key outcomes for youth and Team Leaders of MYAN's 2020 G2O program with the summative data from 2017-2019 to highlight areas of consistency and difference.

## Appendix B. Sample Sizes

### Sample size for career workshop feedback

	Team Leader	Youth
a. College readiness	3	11
b. Resume and cover letters	3	12
c. Career panel	2	11
d. Mock interviews	3	12
e. Money management	4	14
f. BLM and workplace discrimination	4	12

### Sample size for youth participants self-evaluation

The table below details the sample size (n) included in the analysis for each question in the retrospective post-pre section of the youth participant self-evaluation.

	Sample size
1. I feel comfortable talking in a group.	16
2. I feel comfortable presenting in front of an audience.	16
3. I seek out ways to help others feel comfortable talking in a group.	16
4. I keep my remarks on topic when speaking in front of a group.	16
<b>Overall communication scale</b>	16
5. I enjoy working collaboratively with my peers.	16
6. I will help my teammates to complete their work if they need support.	16
7. I seek out ways to find agreement within a project team.	16
8. I sense when others react positively or negatively to comments that I make.	16
<b>Overall teamwork scale</b>	16
9. I feel comfortable identifying a problem.	14
10. I feel comfortable expressing my ideas and opinions.	14
11. I ask others for their ideas and opinions.	14
12. During a group conversation, I feel comfortable summarizing the discussion to make sure that everyone is on the same page.	14
<b>Overall problem-solving scale</b>	14
13. I am comfortable discussing my career path and ideas.	15

14. I am consistently on time to work. <sup>6</sup>	13
15. If I have to miss a day of work, I let my supervisor/Team Leader know in advance.	13
16. If I start a task or project, I make sure to complete it.	15
<b>Overall work readiness scale</b>	13

---

<sup>6</sup> In addition to the four point Likert scale, on questions 14 and 15 respondents could also select *I did not have a job before G2O*, indicating they did not have a baseline for this statement. Two respondents indicated they had not had a job before G2O. They were not included in the analyses for those questions.

## Appendix C. Theory of Change and Logic Model

### Theory of Change (December 2020)

Result Statement	Root Cause Analysis	Strategies
What population-level condition are you trying to address?	Why does this condition exist? Barriers/Facilitators of population-level condition	What are we going to do to address the factors?
<p>Maine has a well-defined workforce pipeline that both supports young people in building skills and relationships and ensures businesses have employees to meet their demands.</p> <p>Target Population: Socioeconomically marginalized youth and young adults with limited employment opportunities from rural and urban communities across Maine.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young people are under-employed; As of April 2020 12% of young people below the age of 24 were unemployed (MDOL).</li> <li>• Youth report feeling under prepared for employment and/or college preparation; Young people in Maine lack meaningful work development opportunities.</li> <li>• Young people not seeing or unable to access local opportunities for employment.</li> <li>• New Mainers and low income youth face unique challenges to seek and obtain employment.</li> <li>• Maine has an aging workforce, making it difficult for employers to find qualified employees.</li> <li>• There is a job shortage in Maine with many young college graduates seeking out of state employment due to limited career alternative pathways for high school graduates and low wages in Maine.</li> <li>• Employers challenged to meaningfully engage youth; lack of youth engagement or youth-adult partnership skills.</li> <li>• Rural communities are experiencing economic hardship, which is enhanced since Covid-19.</li> </ul>	<p>Connect young people (primarily rising juniors and seniors) from local public high schools with paid, work-based employment and skill-building opportunities.</p> <p>Provide pre-program training to Team Leaders and host site supervisors</p> <p>Engage businesses and organizations to host work-based projects</p>
Population-level Condition	Specific challenges	Strategies

## Logic Model

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short-term Outcomes	Mid-term Outcomes	Long-term Outcomes
What resources will use to enact your strategies?	What needs to be done to implement your strategies?	How do we know we are doing the work?	What knowledge, skills, capacity or perceptions will change?	What behaviors, practices or systems will change?	What long-term population conditions will change?
<p><u>Personnel</u> 4.5 FTE (MYAN staff &amp; Team leaders) 17 PTE (youth participants) 6 Host site supervisors 20-30 volunteers (presenters/educators/TA support) Adaptive HR hiring and liability procedures in place</p> <p><u>Funding</u> External investment and donations Internal restricted funding Established fiscal agent</p> <p><u>Facilities, supplies and equipment</u> Host site offices Meeting spaces Technology access (Zoom, Google)</p>	<p>Recruit and enroll youth for 4-5 teams Recruit and enroll 4-5 team leaders</p> <p>Engage, recruit and secure host sites and strategic community partnerships through informational meetings, interviews, etc.</p> <p>Conduct pre-program training for team leaders and host site supervisors. Key components include Youth Adult Partnership, program management, facilitation, team building, conflict resolution.</p> <p>Offer 20 hours of paid work over six weeks to youth incorporating: - 5-6 career workshops - 1-2 business site visits - Daily Social and</p>	<p># youth enrolled</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>youth demographics</li> <li># youth complete program</li> </ul> <p># team leaders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Team leader demographics</li> </ul> <p># host sites</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>#towns hosting program</li> <li>makeup of host sites (business, nonprofit, school, etc.)</li> <li>Industry sector</li> </ul> <p># project teams</p> <p>#team leaders and host sites complete training</p> <p>Total # of contact hours for skill building training for youth</p> <p>Total amount of wages paid to youth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># and type of career workshops</li> <li># of businesses</li> </ul>	<p>Youth build 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills (communication, teamwork, problem solving, conflict resolution and work readiness), with job attainment skills (interviewing, resume writing), and self management skills</p> <p>Youth develop their project management skills</p> <p>Youth participants can identify their strengths and how to apply them to work, teams or individual growth</p> <p>Youth report a sense of self confidence</p> <p>Youth and team leaders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>feel connected to community</li> </ul>	<p>Youth apply skills gained and aspirations to school, teams and employment opportunities</p> <p>Team Leaders hold leadership roles within their community and/or place of employment.</p> <p>Host site business policies and practices support and align with needs of emerging professionals.</p> <p>Host site businesses are more connected to youth and youth-serving organizations</p>	<p>Maine employers invest in local communities throughout Maine to support the future workforce pipeline.</p> <p>Program graduates, youth and Team Leaders, stay connected to the Maine community with a core goal of increasing youth employment growth in Maine.</p>

<p>classroom, iPads, laptops etc.) Food Supplies Original Cutler YCE toolkit, programing and support</p> <p><u>Partners</u> Local high schools Alternative education programs Local colleges (USM and SMCC) Community organizations (TOA) DHHS Local businesses Chamber of Commerce DOE</p>	<p>Emotional Learning skill building activities - Once weekly check ins and reflections with youth participants, team leaders and host site supervisors.</p> <p>Hold a final project presentation for community members and stakeholders; each team presents their completed project.</p>	<p>visited, total</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # and type of SEL activities, by project team</li> <li>• # and type of check ins/reflection activities, by project team</li> </ul> <p>#End-of-year presentations</p> <p># and industry sector of community members and project stakeholders in attendance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have aspirations for their future</li> <li>• connect with business professionals</li> </ul> <p>Team leaders build facilitation and group management skills</p> <p>Youth and team leaders report positive relationships with a program mentor/stakeholders</p> <p>Host site staff build skills and knowledge in youth-adult partnerships and youth engagement</p> <p>Host sites report the project will be used by their organization</p>		
---	---	--	---	--	--