



# BELONG HERE: A TOOLKIT FOR ATTRACTING & KEEPING YOUTH



As the sector that provides the greatest number of first-time jobs, leads in sustainability practices, and actively champions social justice in communities across the country, we are uniquely positioned to continue attracting young talent. Today's youth bring a heightened awareness and expectation around environmental and social impact, and it is important that we continue to clearly communicate the meaningful work already happening across our sector.

Restaurants Canada has partnered with First Work and International Connector to develop this practical toolkit designed to support your workforce strategies by helping attract stronger youth candidates, reduce early turnover and build a more reliable crew pipeline. These resources for use by Managers, Supervisors and Owner/Operators will help you stay best-in-class in recruitment and retention practices.



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# WHY ENHANCE YOUTH ENGAGEMENT?



Youth are the talent pipeline driving our industry forward. As Canada's #1 source of first-time jobs, the restaurant industry is proud to open doors for young people and we're well positioned to keep leading the way. A thoughtful approach helps strengthen awareness among young people, continue to draw them in, and reinforce our identity as a values-driven, community-focused sector.

## ENHANCING YOUTH ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES HELPS:

- Expand current engagement with the emerging workforce to meet staffing needs
- Build on retention success with a coordinated approach to onboarding and training
- Enhance existing reputation as a supportive and inclusive workplace for young people to work, grow, and build skills
- Save time and resources by using clear systems to streamline hiring and communication
- Facilitate access to tools, resources, and partnerships to support your youth hiring strategy and develop young workers

**Bottom line:** The tools in this toolkit provide insights and strategies to reduce turnover, further improve early retention and develop stronger talent pipelines.



# WHAT TO EXPECT FROM TODAY'S YOUTH

## WHAT YOUTH MAY WANT



- Opportunities to contribute ideas and be part of the team
- Opportunities to grow, learn new skills, or move up over time
- Regular, concise, open, and casual communication from supervisors
- Respectful, supportive and inclusive work environments
- A friendly workplace where they can build relationships
- Recognition for their work and effort
- A healthy work-life balance (especially for school or multiple jobs)
- Flexible scheduling options, fair pay and transparency

## TRENDS AMONG YOUTH



- Hands-on learners who thrive with demonstrations and practice
- Team-oriented and enjoy working collaboratively
- Comfortable switching roles or trying different positions (FoH/BoH)
- Open to upskilling (e.g., culinary, bar, leadership)
- Entrepreneurial and comfortable with fast-paced environments
- Digital natives who value tech-friendly processes (scheduling apps, digital training, etc.)
- More formally educated and aware of labour rights and standards
- Socially aware and often value diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Highly mobile — willing to change jobs if they feel unsupported
- Often juggling multiple roles or part-time commitments
- Competing in a global digital job market (and aware of alternative options)

# DESCRIPTIONS OF THE TOOLS INCLUDED & HOW TO USE



There are many tools in this toolkit to enhance the success restaurants already experience as the number one employer of youth in Canada. Here is a short pathway you may wish to follow when using this toolkit:

1. A good place to begin would be with the infographics; review these to familiarize yourself with the ideas and insights.
2. Moving on to the checklists, consider what you're already doing and if there is anything else you would like to be doing; use the checklists to adapt or integrate into processes accordingly and as trackers for action items.
3. Finally, the charts can be used with youth during interviews, onboarding and orientation, as well as check-ins. Determine when you might like to present them to youth during your hiring and employment lifecycle.

## THE YOUTH ENGAGEMENT CYCLE FOR RESTAURANTS

- A quick-reference infographic to give you ideas and insights into how you can structure or coordinate actions to engage youth.

## TIPS AND TRICKS FOR ENGAGING YOUTH

- Easy to reference tips for youth engagement in interviews, onboarding and orientation.

## RESTAURANT REALITY MODE: QUICK GUIDE FOR BUSY SHIFTS

- Quick guidance for supporting and orienting new youth employees during busy shifts.

## 10 THINGS TO AVOID WITH YOUTH EMPLOYEES IN FOODSERVICE

- A simple list of things to remember when engaging and training new youth employees.

## YOUTH INTERVIEW ENGAGEMENT CHECKLIST

- A checklist of items you can use to prepare for and curate an approach to youth interviews. The checklist includes a variety of suggestions that can be used in combination with each other, so you can build your approach based on what makes the most sense for your restaurant.

## YOUTH EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION & ONBOARDING CHECKLIST

- For Managers and Supervisors. This checklist can help guide new youth employees through onboarding and orientation. Included are ideas you can use to plan your process for the first day, month, and beyond for consistent engagement.
- The checklist includes practices that support any new hire, but are especially effective with young or first-time workers.

## CORE COMPETENCIES – YOUTH SELF REFLECTION CHART

- This checklist is designed to help interviewees or new hires reflect on their employability skills and identify areas where they feel confident, as well as opportunities for continued development (it can also be used as an annual check-in).
- The interviewee/new hire reviews each skill category and its descriptions, then selects the rating that best reflects their current level of comfort or experience. The notes section can be used to add examples, highlight strengths, or outline specific goals for growth. This tool is meant to support the employer and employee's understanding of learning, self-awareness, and ongoing professional development opportunities.
- It is important to present this tool as an opportunity to learn about the youth's current strengths and how they can be supported to grow and develop, thus enabling them to achieve their full potential.
- **Customizability:** The chart is pre-populated with core strengths but can be edited to tailor it to your needs.
- The tool includes a description of its purpose and how to complete it for the youth.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PATHWAYS IN RESTAURANTS CHART

- This chart highlights potential development pathways available within restaurants and the broader foodservice sector. It provides new hires or interviewees with a chance to learn about the training and growth opportunities available to them through working in your restaurant.
- The idea is to demonstrate that through completing the day-to-day activities and responsibilities of their role, they are developing skills and competencies that are transferrable and lend themselves to upward mobility either in your restaurant or in the foodservice sector in general.
- **Customizability:** The chart is pre-populated with examples but can be edited to more accurately reflect your workplace.

# APPENDIX AND SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

List of online resources to easily find and connect with local employment service providers.

**Please Note:** Many of the service providers in these networks will support youth as a focus or in addition to other groups, but there will be service providers focusing on other population groups, too. Resources are only listed for Provinces for which they are available.

- **WorkBC (British Columbia):** [WorkBC Centre Locations | WorkBC](#)
- **Alberta Employment Services Directory:** [Employment and Training Services Directory | Alberta.ca](#)
- **Manitoba Employment and Training Partnerships:** [Province of Manitoba | wd - Employment and Training Partnerships](#)
- **First Work Members (Ontario):** [Members - First Work](#)
- **Alliance des centre-conseils en emploi (Quebec):** [Our Members - AXTRA | Alliance of Employment Counselling Centres](#)
- **WorkingNB Offices (New Brunswick):** [WorkingNB Offices | PETL Working NB](#)
- **Nova Scotia Works:** [Home | Nova Scotia Works | novascotiaworks.ca](#)
- **PEI Employment Services:** [Employment Assistance Services | Government of Prince Edward Island](#)
- **Newfoundland and Labrador Employment Centres:** [Employment Centres - Jobs, Growth and Rural Development](#)



# LANGUAGE GLOSSARY OF TRENDS IN YOUTH VALUES

**Please Note:** This glossary is not comprehensive, it is an introductory overview to some key terms. These are functional definitions in the context of trends within some parts of the youth demographic, not dictionary definitions prizing academic rigor. Not all youth engage with these values or language, so assumptions should not be made on their behalf.

- **DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION** – The integration of people from different cultures, communities, or lifestyles into the workplace as equal members of a dynamic team where everyone is supported to perform to the best of their ability
  - Examples include accommodations for people with disabilities, pronoun respect and use for people with different gender identities, allowing time and space for prayer for Muslims, etc.
  - Honouring the diverse religious observances and festivals of our team members (such as Eid, by providing flexible break times to support practices like post-sunset dining during periods of religious significance)
  - An employer cannot ask about these things directly (i.e., what's your gender identity or do you have a disability?), but can create mechanisms for disclosure and accommodation
  - For instance, during onboarding, new hires can be asked questions about how they can be supported to be successful in the workplace, whether they require accommodations or if there is anything the employer should be aware of to facilitate successful integration into the team (these questions can be raised again during employee check-ins)
- **PURPOSE** – The value beyond the pay cheque of working for a specific employer
  - Opportunities for skill development, having a positive presence in their community, creating a welcoming environment for diverse members of the community, maturing alongside their co-workers and supporting employees with less experience are all good examples
- **EMPATHY** – Understanding and respecting the feelings of employees; using this understanding to create a safe space where diverse opinions, lifestyles, and experiences are welcomed in a nonjudgemental manner, and communication is respectful in all situations (even during busy or high-pressure times)
- **SAFE SPACE** – An environment free from judgement, peer pressure, or taunting in which emotional security and wellbeing is included in safety considerations alongside physical safety practices
  - Clarity of expectations and performance in real time – being clear is kind
- **SUSTAINABILITY** – Everyday practices to reduce food waste, promote environmental protection, and minimize the impact, use or improper disposal of 'forever chemicals and materials'
- **ENCOURAGING VS. DISCOURAGING LANGUAGE**
  - "Sometimes things are so busy we have to communicate quickly and concisely" vs. "You need to have a thick skin to succeed"
  - "Sometimes you'll be working long hours, but we try to balance employee needs with the staffing needs of the restaurant" vs. "Everyone has to work long hours"

# PARTNERS, SOURCES AND CONTRIBUTING RESTAURANT CREDITS

WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK OUR CONTRIBUTING PARTNERS:



Learn more about the experiences of unemployed youth: [Ontario's Unemployed Book - First Work](#)



Learn more about Canada's future workforce: [Canada Future Workforce Report Summary](#)

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

## Uber Eats

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