



# Youth Empowering Parents (YEP): A Social Return on Investment (SROI) Study

**\$12 OF SOCIETAL BENEFIT IS GENERATED FOR EVERY \$1 INVESTED INTO YEP**

Youth Empowering Parents (YEP) launched in 2010 to provide meaningful volunteer experiences for youth and innovate within the adult and senior literacy space. YEP facilitates the one-on-one tutoring of adults by youth in the topics of English, computer skills and various life skills.

In many immigrant households, children regularly assist parents. They translate mail, teach digital technologies, and help their parents in many ways. YEP brings this household dynamic into a formal classroom. Pairs are assigned by family relationship (i.e. a child teaching a parent) or language similarities (e.g. a Somali youth teaching a Somali adult). A YEP “Academic Coach” observes and evaluates each pair, continuously giving teaching tips to youth to improve their teaching ability. This program is designed to unlock the leadership potential of any youth by enabling them to convey knowledge that is second-nature to them.

Ten youth and ten adults joined a twelve-week pilot program in September 2010 where English and computer skills were the main focus of the curriculum. Since then, the program has grown to benefit over 3,000 people from more than 50 nationalities, and address a broad array of life skills and development. Lessons now include conversational English, advanced computer skills, environmental literacy, health literacy, financial literacy, navigating the school system, locating neighbourhood resources, resume building, applying for jobs, and much more. Any concept that young people can grasp, and that adults or seniors need assistance with, is easily turned into one of YEP’s award-winning lesson formats, which feature easy to follow instructions and images that enable youth to teach with ease.

The YEP model is one which works efficiently and is easily replicated, operating in over a dozen locations across four countries (Canada, Spain, Ethiopia and Niger). The overall societal impact the YEP program has is one that provides long-term results and benefits, such as a decreasing government spending in key areas, increasing community volunteering, and an overall increase in engagement for both younger and older generations within a community.

## Quick Facts

- The YEP program has expanded from 20 participants in 2010 to over 500 participants per year
  - The average investment required is only \$225 per person
  - Over 8,000 volunteer hours are contributed by YEP youth volunteers annually
  - Youth participants range in age from 10 to 20. Adult and senior participants range from 28 to 71
  - The program operates in 4 countries: Canada, Spain, Ethiopia, and Niger
  - 90% of participants return to the program for multiple semesters
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- In 2011, YEP received the United Nations’ Innovation award, given annually to only 10 organizations from around the world.
  - In 2014, YEP received Canada’s top annual literacy prize given by ABC Life Literacy Canada: the Great-West Life, London Life and Canada Life Literacy Innovation Award

## The Youth Empowering Parents program accomplishes:

- Improved English, technology, and other functional literacy in adults and seniors, better integration into Canadian society and/or reduced social isolation
- Build bridges between different generations (youth, adults and seniors) for stronger communities
- Improved dialogue among different cultures
- Foster good citizenship and volunteerism among youth to grow future leaders

## What is Social Return on Investment?

A Social Return on Investment (SROI) study places a dollar value on program outcomes. It finds the financial benefit of a program by:

- Examining program benefits;
- Using research to assign a dollar value to cost and benefits; and
- Calculating the overall return on every dollar invested into the program.

YEP became interested in SROI because of a desire to start measuring beyond the standard outcome and impact metrics. It was known that the program attracted a lot of participant interest, had low turnover, and high satisfaction among participants, but the full extent that YEP was having on the beneficiaries was uncertain. How did participation in YEP make them feel at a deeper level? What effect did it have on their lives? And most importantly, to what extent is YEP responsible for impacting a person's life, versus other programs they are simultaneously involved in? SROI could help reveal the 'full story' of what is happening.

## Methodology and Results

Survey data of 545 participants (273 youth and 272 adults) from the 2013-14 program year were analyzed. Comparison data and financial proxies (i.e. the dollar value of an outcome) was gathered from secondary sources. The study was focused on benefits gained by participants during the 2013-14 program year, as well as estimations about the future benefits that participants will experience. A very conservative approach was applied:

- very low attribution to YEP was assigned for nearly all metrics; and
- the lasting impact of each benefit was limited to between 1 and 3 years, rather than potentially several decades as is common in other SROI studies.

Despite this conservative approach, the resulting SROI calculation was **\$12 of societal benefit for every \$1 invested** into the program.



## Four categories of differential life outcomes were examined:

### Employment

- (Youth) Higher grades
- (Y) Strong feelings of accomplishment
- (Y) Valuable personal development
- (Adults) Improved digital literacy
- (A) Increased language proficiency
- (A) Success in YEP leads to enrollment in higher learning programs

### Mental health and well-being

- (A) Faster & less expensive integration into society
- (A) Better ability to communicate
- (A) Reduced social anxiety & isolation
- (Y) Reduced 'Parentification' as parents become more self reliant

### Relationships

- (Y) Better role models
- (Y) Improved self-esteem

### Volunteerism

- (Y) Increased likelihood of volunteering in the future
- (Y) Completion of youth volunteer hours

## Conclusion

Millions of dollars are spent every year for basic adult literacy programs. Youth are a great resource to reduce this expenditure, and YEP enables them to teach the same material at far less the cost of traditional government funded classrooms. In addition to relieving pressure on social services, the program's reverse-mentorship model provides essential support to

youth during formative development stages while enhancing community volunteerism and engagement.

This framework for this study was developed by Boston Consulting Group; research and attribution labels were completed by external volunteers and by Community Seed Consulting. Further details of the findings are on the subsequent pages of this report, and the full data set is available on our website, at [www.yepeducation.com/sroi](http://www.yepeducation.com/sroi)