



**Learnings from  
Conversations with  
Young  
Changemakers  
PART 2**

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# Introduction

FUEL is a Canadian organization working to create an authentic and vibrant community of changemakers, equipped with the skills and support to achieve their goals and create sustainable impact.

## Our Audience

Our work supports young people (aged 18-30) in the midst of social change work. They are often the founders or current leaders of community impact work.

## Our Values

We are driven by youth voice - Everything we do, we do with youth. We aim to bring out the best in all those around us. We succeed together through authenticity, kindness and trust. We embrace the joy of changemaking.

## Our Approach

- Engage youth as experts, with meaningful involvement in key decisions
- Provide fair compensation and value their lived experience
- Ensure a space where youth are invited to bring their whole selves
- Encourage rest, fun and time to recharge



# FUEL's Story

## » Our Why

We work with those who are passionate about making our world a better place. Young changemakers are creating immeasurable impact through their work and have incredible potential for social change.

Young changemakers are critical drivers of positive social change, but without community and tailored support, this work takes a significant personal toll.

FUEL is built on a culture where people feel seen, valued and trusted. Our mission is to foster a vibrant community of young changemakers, equipped with the skills and supports to achieve their goals and create sustainable impact.

## » Our Journey Thus Far

Young people are at the core of everything we do. Our programs are developed through co-development with young changemakers, and young changemakers are part of FUEL's core staff team. Our research and collaboration informs all of our work and allows us to be intentional in developing programming that truly responds to the needs of youth, and has included:

- **Interviews with 43 young changemakers** in Canada to understand their drivers, successes, challenges and support needs
- **Three co-development sessions** with changemakers to define our offerings
- Extensive secondary research
- Conversations with service organizations and funders across the sector
- **Pilot event in June 2023**

**Designing  
Offerings for  
Young  
Changemakers**





# Key Learnings for the Design of Offerings for Young Changemakers

Fifteen young changemakers participated in co-development sessions to discuss:

- the gaps or areas for improvement in existing programming
- the types of offerings and services that would specifically address their needs and interests, while at the same time honor their current circumstances and responsibilities
- important considerations for how organizations can meaningfully centre youth voices

## Key Finding #1:

**Young changemakers value each other's expertise and want to learn from each other's experiences.**

- They want **community**, not networks.
- They seek **like-minded people** for emotional support and validation.
- They want opportunities to benefit from each other's knowledge and experiences.
- They want to hear about lived experiences, not accolades and accomplishments.
- They want casual, organic ways to do this (e.g. socials, drop-in workshops).

## Implications:

1. Prioritize peer-based support, rather than subject matter experts and experienced speakers
2. Prioritize community building, providing time and space for relationship building and social support



# Key Learnings for the Design of Offerings for Young Changemakers

## **Key Finding #2:**

**Young changemakers offerings should align with their stage along the changemaking journey.**

- Young changemakers fall into many client segments, with very different needs.
- People beginning their changemaking journeys have different support needs than those who have been doing this work for longer.
- Within this demographic, their experiences and daily life vary drastically:
  - some are parents
  - some juggle multiple professional responsibilities, including school
  - others have varied needs related to health, ability, income and residential location

## **Implications:**

1. Develop multiple program options, and tailor programs for where youth are along in their changemaker journeys
2. Consider offerings that meet the needs of various groups
3. Collect feedback regularly and ensure programming is responsive and agile



# Key Learnings for the Design of Offerings for Young Changemakers

## Key Finding #3:

**Changemaking can be lonely. Simply being with others doing this work is healing and generative.**

- Changemakers expressed a gap in programs that specifically address this need of spending time with those with shared experiences, of communing around what is hard together. In their words: *“My work is about making space for others but no one is making space for me.”*
- The personal vs professional divide is a false binary. For young changemakers, there is often an overlap between personal and professional lives and goals.

## Implications:

1. Support emotional needs through community-building
2. Create space for rest, fun and authentic human connection, through unstructured time and social gatherings



# Key Learnings for the Design of Offerings for Young Changemakers

## Key Finding #4:

**Stress and burnout is a key barrier to sustainable changemaking and broader social impact.**

- Many young changemakers:
  - are burned out, or at risk of burnout
  - experience significant barriers, such as limited access to resources and industry connections
  - do not feel valued for their work, expertise and lived experiences
- Young changemakers may experience additional stress due to the overwhelming nature of the social challenges they aim to address.
- Many began their social change journey due to their own lived experiences, or the injustices they saw within their communities, and engaging in this work, without responsive supports, can take an emotional toll

## Implications:

1. Provide spaces focused on safety and belonging
2. Embrace joy and provide opportunities for fun
3. Treat wellbeing as a core aspect of capacity building or professional development, rather than personal care outside of “work”