

# Evidence of the Impact of Youth Social Entrepreneurship Programs

## *Results of a Two-Year Research Study*

### YOUTH SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAMS IN THE RESEARCH STUDY

- Appetite for Change
- Cookie Cart
- Cycles for Change
- Dream of Wild Health
- Elpis Enterprises
- Keystone Community Services – Youth Express
- Lakes Center for Youth and Families – Tried and True Small Engines
- Pillsbury United Communities – Sisterhood Boutique
- Tree Trust
- Urban Roots
- Urban Strategies, Inc. – Green Garden Bakery



SUNDANCE  
FAMILY FOUNDATION

*The Sundance Family Foundation invests in Youth Social Entrepreneurship (YSE) programs: youth-centric, youth-led enterprises (i.e., businesses or community social initiatives) that include the development of entrepreneurial thought, community engagement, social-emotional learning, and workforce readiness. These are the results of a 24-month research study on the impacts of YSE programs on youth. The 11 participating YSE programs served almost 900 youth from fall 2016 through summer 2018.*

## The YSE model contributes to youth developing work readiness skills.

Staff assessed youth on 12 items related to work readiness, including professional skills, interpersonal skills, and other skills. Overall, after 30 or more days of programming, staff observed improvement in 11 of 12 items measured (all except “attendance”). On average, youth were proficient on 6.6 items at pre-assessment, increasing to 9.6 items at post-assessment (Figure 1).

The item with most improvement was in “quality of work,” in which 52 percent of youth improved and 36% who were not proficient at the time of the pre-assessment, demonstrated proficiency at the post-assessment.

### 1. Staff ratings of youth’s work readiness skills



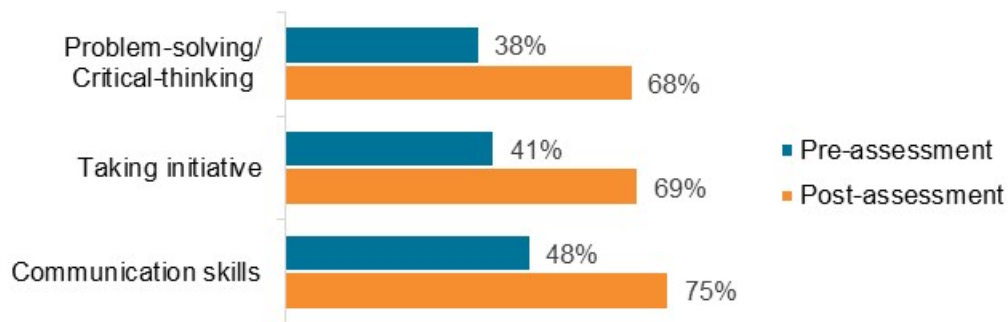
Note. This chart indicates the average number of items youth are proficient or exemplary in. A total of 410 youth had matching pre/post-assessments, though only 308 were assessed on “other skills.” Significance tests were conducted using McNamara test; the number of proficient/exemplary items at post-assessment was statistically higher than at pre-assessment.

## Youth also develop interpersonal and social-emotional skills through YSE programs.

According to both youth self-assessments and staff assessments, youth's interpersonal and social-emotional skills improved over the course of their tenure in YSE programming.

Staff reported that 30 percent or more of youth gained proficiency on problem-solving/critical-thinking, taking initiative, and communication skills. In addition, the proportion of youth proficient on these items at post-assessment was 27-30 percentage points higher than at the pre-assessment (Figure 2).

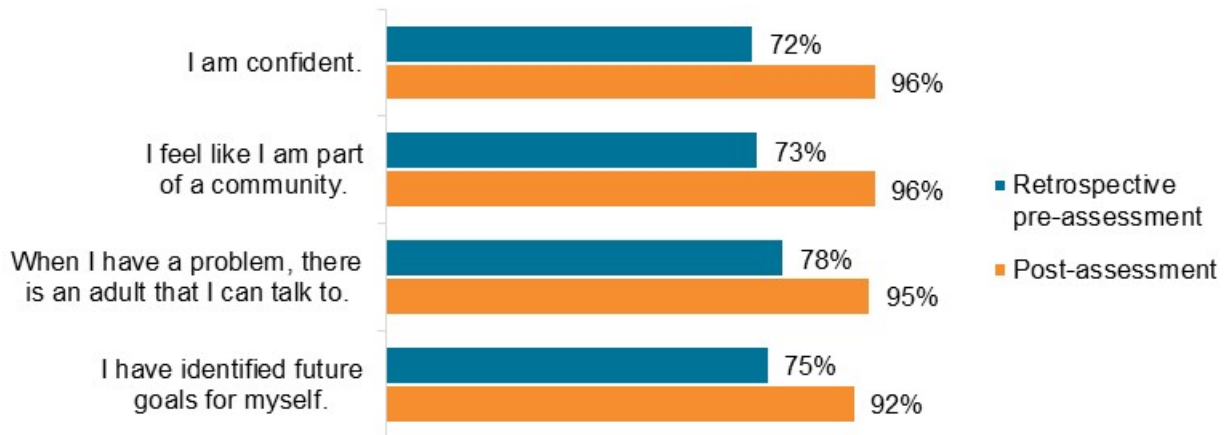
### 2. Staff ratings, 10 programs



Note. N=407-410. This chart indicates the percentage of youth proficient or exemplary in each skill. Significance tests were conducted using McNamara test; the percent proficient/exemplary at post-assessment was statistically higher than at pre-assessment on all three items. One program with a small dataset was not included, as only one youth was rated.

Over 90 percent of youth agreed with the following social-emotional skill statements after participating in their respective program: feeling confident, feeling part of their community, having an adult to talk to about problems, and having future goals for themselves (Figure 3).

### 3. Youth self-ratings, 11 programs

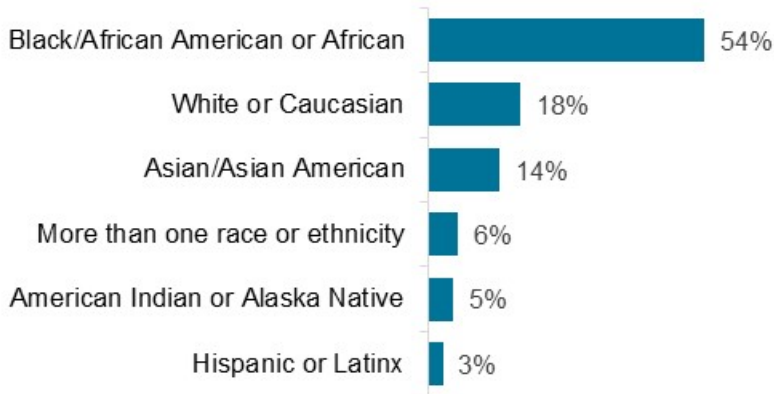


Note. N=511-515. This chart indicates the percentage of youth who agreed or strongly agreed with each statement. Significance tests were conducted using McNamara test; the percentage agreeing with the item at post-assessment was statistically higher than the retrospective pre-assessment percentage on all four items.

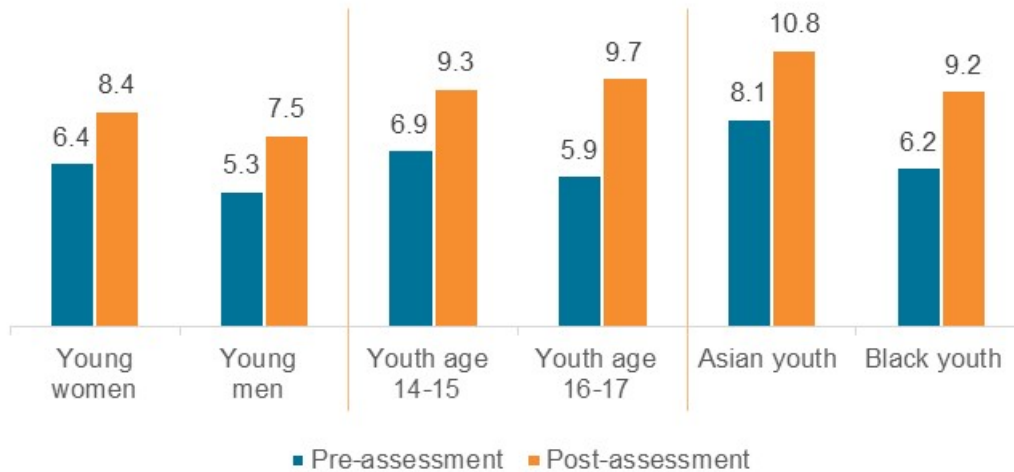
## YSE programs serve diverse youth.

The almost 900 youth served in YSE programs were a diverse group. About half of youth identified as male and half as female. The majority of youth (81%) were age 14-17, though participants ranged in age from 13 through 24. The average age was 16. Racially, youth were diverse, with over half identifying as Black, African American or African (54%; Figure 4). Regardless of race/ethnic identity, gender or age, each demographic group showed improvement (Figure 5).

### 4. Race and ethnicity of youth served YSE programs, all 11 programs



### 5. Staff ratings of youth's work readiness skills, 10 programs, by demographic characteristics



## Acknowledgements

Thank you to staff at the participating YSE programs who informed the evaluation and collected the data for this project, and their participants and staff who completed surveys for this evaluation.

Thank you to staff at the Sundance Family Foundation who engaged the services of Redpath Consulting Group, LLC and the Nonprofit Data Geeks for the development of an app for the Salesforce Database, and hosted support and user learning seminars for program staff using the database and app.

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**The full report** will be available here by April 30, 2019:  
<https://www.sundancefamilyfoundation.org/yseworks/>

## Background

In winter 2016, the Sundance Family Foundation partnered with Wilder Research to engage a cohort of Youth Social Entrepreneurship (YSE) programs in a 24-month evaluation capacity building and a research study. Sundance defines YSE programs as youth-centric, youth-led enterprises (i.e., businesses or community social initiatives) that include the development of entrepreneurial thought, community engagement, social-emotional learning (SEL), and workforce readiness. The purpose of the study was to position YSE programs to conduct evaluation and gather evidence of YSE program impact on youth.

A total of 14 programs (12 organizations) participated in the YSE research cohort; 11 are included in this year's report using the following methods.

- Staff at 10 YSE programs assessed youth on 12 skills using a **Work Readiness Tool** from the U.S. Department of Labor within two weeks of employment and again at the end of their employment (at least 30 days later). Staff assessed youth on a 4-point scale: Exemplary, Proficient, Needs Development, or Improvement Plan Needed. A total of 412 youth were included in the analysis, ranging from 8-152 per program.
- All 11 programs implemented the **Youth Retrospective Survey**, developed by Wilder Research. Across the 11 programs, 519 youth completed the survey. Youth rated their level of agreement or disagreement with each survey item twice, once based on how they felt at the time of taking the survey, and once reflecting back to how they felt prior to joining their respective program.

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### For more information

This summary presents highlights of the *Evaluation of Twin Cities Youth Social Entrepreneurship Programs*.

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