

Student Leadership & Youth Empowerment (SLYE) Network

Evaluation Report 2021



Presented by The Students Commission of Canada, September 2021

Origin Story

The SLYE Network is a grassroots, cross-sector collaborative organization (inclusive of partners from sectors such as government, non-government, faith/cultural groups, private business, schools, and youth) that works towards increased community engagement and equitable access to services for Toronto youth.

Monthly network meetings are organized for the collaborative so that members have the opportunity to meet new people who are invested in youth, to share their resources, and to find innovative ways to collaborate. In addition to monthly network meetings, weekly network meetings are organized with the SLYE Youth Council that consists of 12 volunteer youth leaders facing social and economic barriers (low-income, racialized, LGBTQ2S+, newcomers, women, and differently abled).

The main activity of the SLYE Network is the Peer to Peer (P2P) Leadership program, which provides volunteer leadership opportunities to P2P Youth Leaders comprised of youth (ages 14-18) who are furthest away from opportunity in Toronto. Once the P2P Youth Leaders complete the training, they put their skills into practice by leading school youth outreach events, the Roadshow. The Roadshow is a youth outreach initiative that takes place in Toronto (Downtown, York, East York, North York, Etobicoke, and Scarborough) high schools during the spring and fall, and in community spaces (malls, community centres, etc.) throughout the year. The Roadshow consists of a series of outreach events that connect thousands of youth with essential programs and services (health, employment, volunteering, education, recreation, arts, scholarships) being offered in their community.

The P2P Leadership program is funded by Ontario Trillium Foundation for three year (2019-2021). This program gives 3,375 youth facing barriers an authentic opportunity to build essential leadership qualities (self-awareness, confidence, empathy, conflict management, problem solving, teamwork, communication, critical thinking, decision-making) and volunteer as leaders by taking ownership of their program so youth can take charge of their own lives and positively engage in their community. This program doesn't end with the P2P Youth Leaders; it helps 45,000-50,000 of their peers connect with and navigate essential resources in their community through the Roadshow.



The information above was copied
from www.slyenetwork.com

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to gain a greater understanding of how youth are engaged in SLYE's Peer to Peer (P2P) Leadership program, an initiative funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation. The P2P Leadership program provides volunteer leadership opportunities to P2P Youth Leaders comprised of youth (ages 14-18) who are furthest away from opportunity in Toronto. The SLYE Network supports P2P Leaders to build essential leadership qualities and then the youth put their skills into practice by organizing and implementing school outreach events (the Roadshow) that help their peers connect to essential community resources. With the current COVID-19 pandemic, SLYE has had to transition their activities virtually. Hence, this report also aims to understand the impact of this pandemic on the young participants.

SLYE chose two quantitative survey modules, *Preparing to Lead* and *Resource in the Community*, to identify trends and measure outcomes of the program. P2P Leaders as well as SLYE youth council and placement students also participated in focus groups to share their needs and experience. An overview of the findings is documented below.

Preparing to Lead: Overall, youth seemed to gain a lot of leadership skills through their participation in the program. They self-reported an increase on all the aspects of this module from the beginning to the end of the program. The increases between before and after the program were statistically significant across all three Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). These findings are consistent with youth in previous years of programming, suggesting a positive impact of the SLYE program.

Resources in the Community: Overall, youth seemed to gain skills in navigating resources of their community with the SLYE program. Their results showed statistically significant increases from the beginning to the end of the program for all three KPIs. Again, these findings are consistent with youth who participated in 2019 and 2020. SLYE seems to be a valuable asset in connecting youth with various resources throughout the years.

P2P Leaders Focus Groups: P2P Leaders had many positive experiences in the program, while also believing that SLYE fostered a very safe environment. A major theme surrounded the numerous opportunities provided to youth, as well as the ability to get involved in many organizations. Youth learned many skills including employment skills, leadership skills, communication skills and organization skills. They felt connected within the program as they developed new, lasting relationships with other in the program. Finally, youth believed that the program increased their access to resources and their connection with community.

Youth Council and Placement Student Focus Group: Similar to the P2P Leaders, youth council members and placement students had very positive experiences in the SLYE program. They believed that SLYE provided a safe environment for youth to feel supported without judgement. They also felt that SLYE provided an opportunity for youth to have their voices heard and to make an impact on programming in the community. Students learned new skills in terms of their leadership, as well as increasing their confidence facilitating. They thoroughly enjoyed the collaborative nature of the program, describing it as a program fostering connection and relationships. They believed that youth had many opportunities to access resources in the community and were able to growth their networks.

Process and Tools to Date

SLYE chose two (2) quantitative survey modules to identify trends and measure outcomes of the program. A total of 44 youth participants filled out the two modules used to evaluate the program at the end of the program:

- The **Preparing to Lead** module examines the extent to which youth have educational experiences that respond to their needs and prepare them to lead.
- The **Resources in the Community** module examines the extent to which youth know about and are able to easily navigate (i.e. reach, use, or join) resources in their communities. Resources include educational organizations, health services, housing services, counselling, and more.

Each module consists of 10–20 questions.¹ All of the questions within the 3 modules used a 5-point scale (1= Strongly disagree, 5= Strongly agree) to determine how much participants agreed or disagreed with the statements.

P2P Leaders, youth council members, and placement students also participated in focus groups. The focus groups provided a space for youth to reflect on their experiences and needs during COVID-19, share ideas for improving the program, and share the impact that participation has had on their lives. In total, 38 youth contributed to the three focus groups.

The focus groups were facilitated by SCC staff and were recorded and transcribed to be analyzed for significant themes with counts of how many times each theme was mentioned. Significant quotes were drawn from the analysis to support the numbers with participants’ thoughts, feelings, and personal experiences. Names or identifying information have been removed from the quotes and replaced with denotations such as “[name]” or a letter in place to insure anonymity.

P2P Leaders also filled out a demographics module to share more about themselves.

| Program | Quantitative Tools | Qualitative Tools |
|---|--|-----------------------|
| SLYE — P2P Leaders | - Preparing to Lead (n=44) - Resources in the Community (n=44) - Demographics (n=44) | - Focus Groups (n=31) |
| SLYE — Youth Council and Placement Students | - N/A | - Focus Group (n=7) |

¹ Questions are grouped into statistically reliable sets. Reliability is a measure of internal consistency of a set of questions. In other words, each set of questions is good at measuring the related, but different aspects of what is being studied.

Organization of the Report

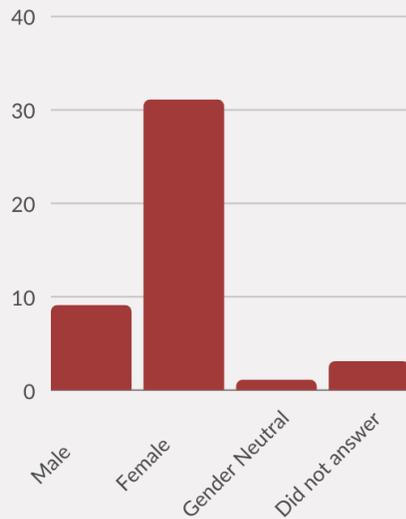
This report will be broken down into five sections. The sections will be as follows:

- 1) Demographics:** This section will give an overview and breakdown of the various demographics who took part in the program evaluation. The information in this section will be displayed as an infographic to allow for a visual representation of the data.
- 2) Quantitative Results – Preparing to Lead Module:** This section is a quantitative analysis of how youth answered the preparing to lead module with a graph to visually represent the data.
- 3) Quantitative Results – Resources in Community Module:** This section is a quantitative analysis of how youth answered the resources in the community module and is graphed to provide a visual representation of the data.
- 4) Qualitative Results — P2P Leaders Focus Group:** The analysis of the focus group is organized based on the frequent themes that came out of the conversations.
- 5) Qualitative Results — Youth Council and Placement Students Focus Group:** The analysis of the focus group is organized based on the frequent themes that came out of the conversations.

Demographics

This section outlines the demographic breakdown of the youth who attended SLYE programming in 2021.

Gender



Born in a country other than Canada



Parents born in a country other than Canada



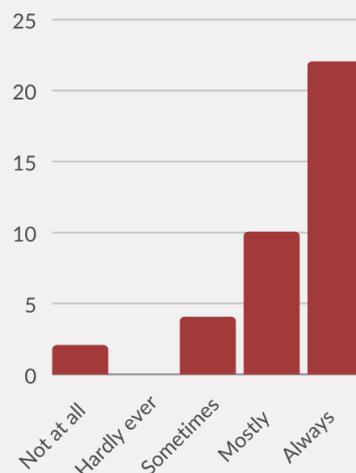
Cultural and Racial Groups

| | | | |
|--------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| East African | 2.3 % | South Asian | 43.2 % |
| West African | 9.1 % | West Asian | 2.3 % |
| Caribbean | 2.3 % | Multiple Ethnicities | 9.1 % |
| Chinese | 13.6 % | Did not answer | 9.1 % |
| Filipino | 9.1 % | | |

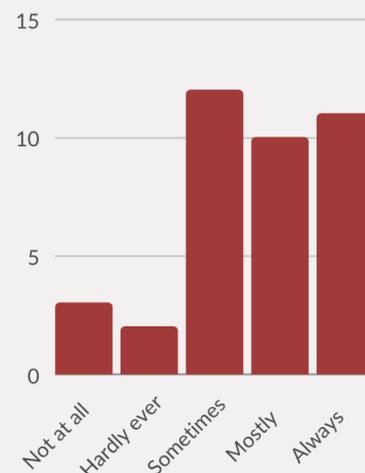
Sexual Orientation

| | |
|----------------------|--------|
| Bisexual | 4.5 % |
| Heterosexual | 61.4 % |
| Asexual | 2.3 % |
| Multiple Sexualities | 4.5 % |
| Did not answer | 27.3 % |

Do you have enough money to meet your basic needs?



Do you have enough money to do the fun things you'd like to do?



Language Spoken at Home

| | |
|--------------------|--------|
| English | 31.8 % |
| Filipino | 2.3 % |
| Punjabi | 2.3 % |
| Tamil | 2.3 % |
| Urdu | 2.3 % |
| Multiple Languages | 47.7 % |
| Did not answer | 11.4 % |

Average Age:

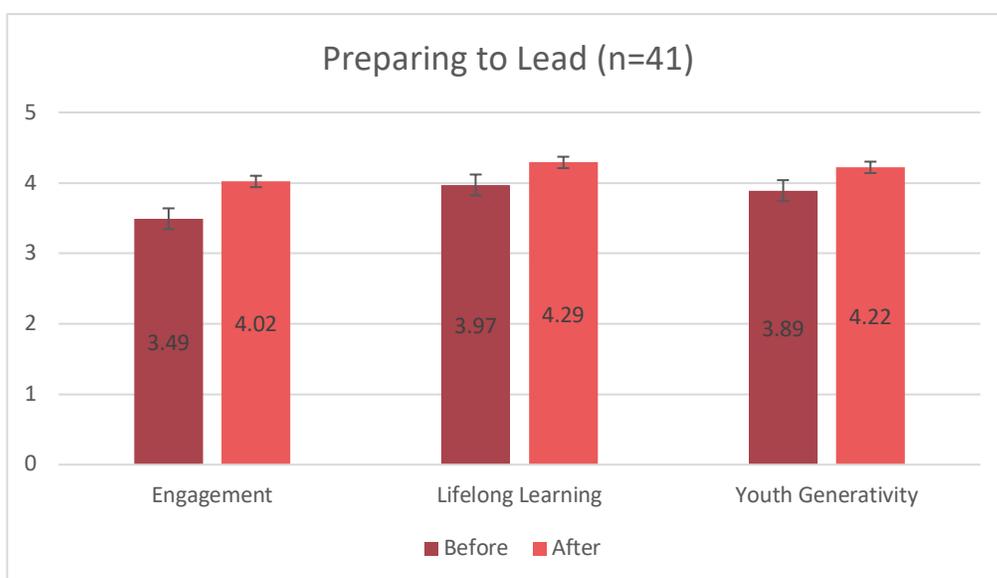
16.13

Quantitative Results – Preparing to Lead

The **Preparing to Lead** module focuses on youth leadership in terms of the following three components: **Engagement, Lifelong Learning, and Youth Generativity** (leaving a legacy for future generations). This questionnaire contains 25 items that youth are asked to respond to on a five-point scale: Not at all (1), A little bit (2), Moderately (3), A lot (4), and Completely (5).

This module was post-retrospective. This method allows for the exploration of participants self-reported change during and/or after a program. Youth were invited to fill this module after their participation in the program. For each statement, they rated their agreement at the beginning of the program, and at the moment. (see Appendix A for the results on each question).

The following graph presents the overall average as well as the average of each component, which were statistically analyzed.



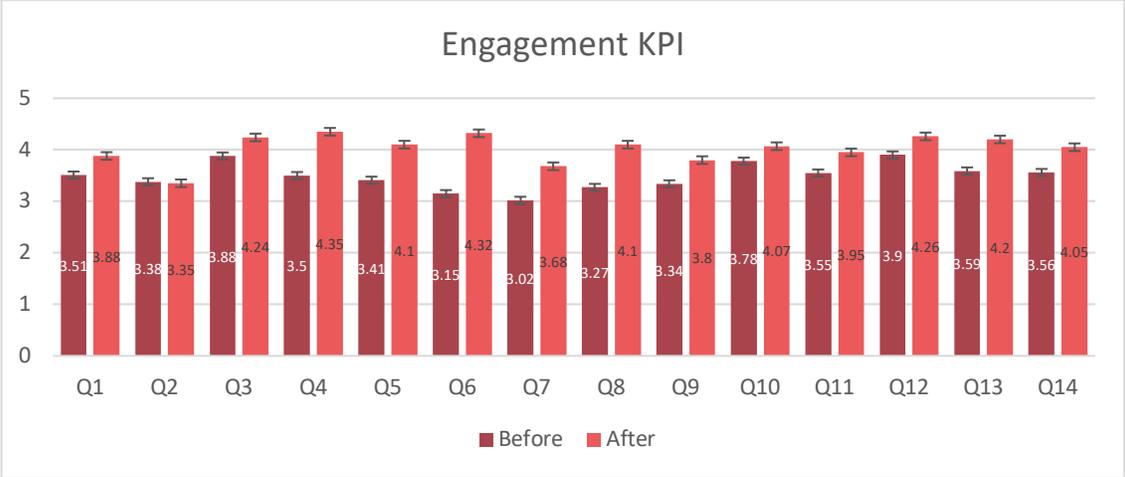
| KPI | Before | After | Mean Difference | Significance |
|--------------------|--------|-------|-----------------|--------------|
| Engagement | 3.49 | 4.02 | -0.53632 | <.001** |
| Lifelong Learning | 3.97 | 4.29 | -0.31925 | <.001** |
| Youth Generativity | 3.89 | 4.22 | -0.32927 | 0.017** |

Takeaway: Overall, youth who participated in the P2P Leadership program from SLYE reported increasing leadership skills throughout the year. The results suggest that youth themselves felt like improving their leadership skills from the beginning of the program to the end. When statistically comparing the results, the t-tests² revealed significant increases on all three components as well as on the overall results. It seems like youth felt that SLYE offered an environment fostering learning experiences and allowing them to play an active role in decision-making.

² A t-test assesses whether the means of two groups are statistically different from each other. The larger the t-score, the more difference between the two groups.

These results were similar to what was observed in the programming year of 2019 and 2020. Youth who participated in this program in 2019 and 2020 also showed statistically significant increases on all the components and on the overall results. These similarities suggest consistency in the program and the valued conveyed by SLYE throughout the years.

Engagement KPI

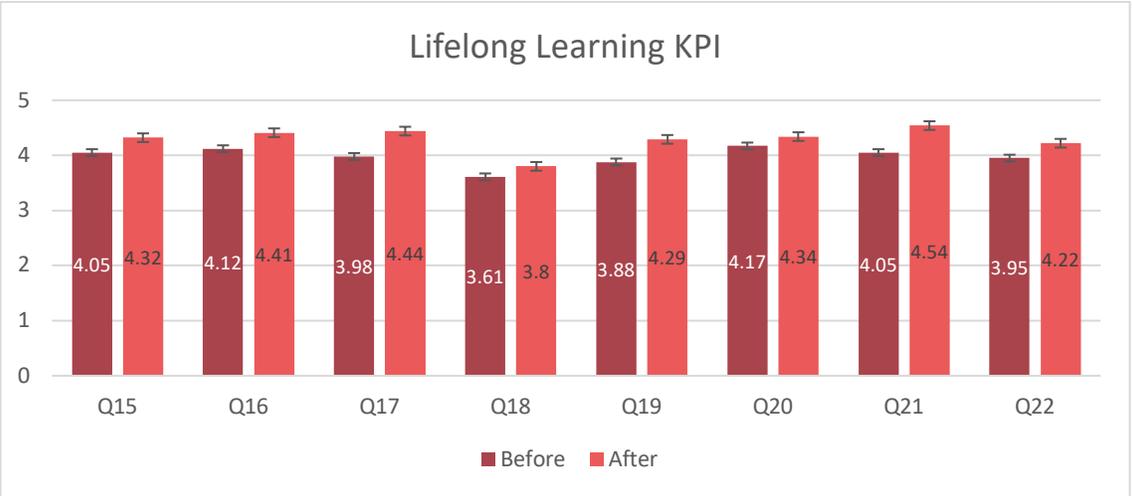


| Engagement KPI by Question | Before | After | Mean Difference | Significance |
|--|--------|-------|-----------------|--------------|
| 1. I am asked for input about what activities I would like to do before activities are planned. | 3.51 | 3.88 | -0.366 | 0.023** |
| 2. Adults do not make negative assumptions about me. | 3.38 | 3.35 | 0.025 | 0.785 |
| 3. Adults talk to me in ways that I can understand and am comfortable with. | 3.88 | 4.24 | -0.366 | 0.006** |
| 4. I am encouraged to discuss things and ask questions to others. | 3.5 | 4.35 | -0.85 | <.001** |
| 5. I am encouraged and supported to solve problems in new ways. | 3.41 | 4.1 | -0.692 | <.001** |
| 6. I am learning new skills. | 3.15 | 4.32 | -1.171 | <.001** |
| 7. I feel like adults and peers are learning from me. | 3.02 | 3.68 | -0.659 | <.001** |
| 8. I participate in the decisions about group activities. | 3.27 | 4.1 | -0.829 | <.001** |
| 9. I participate in setting group rules and guidelines. | 3.34 | 3.8 | -0.463 | 0.001** |
| 10. If youth want to do an activity that for some reason isn't appropriate, we are told right away and given an explanation of the reasons why. | 3.78 | 4.07 | -0.293 | 0.063 |
| 11. I have opportunities to learn on my own (e.g. adults start a discussion with me about issues so that I can figure it out on my own rather than telling me what to do). | 3.55 | 3.95 | -0.4 | 0.028** |
| 12. I make sure that all group members have a say in laying out our purposes, expectations, motivations and roles. | 3.9 | 4.26 | -0.359 | 0.037** |
| 13. I am involved in discussing issues of respects, conflict, or discipline. | 3.59 | 4.2 | -0.61 | <.001** |

| | | | | |
|---|------|------|--------|---------|
| 14. Adults support me without being condescending or assuming that I need or want their help. | 3.56 | 4.05 | -0.488 | 0.001** |
|---|------|------|--------|---------|

Takeaway: Youth felt significantly more engaged after the program, as they scored higher on many questions when comparing their engagement throughout the program. They believed that after the program, they were asked for their input more often and spoke to in ways they could understand. They believed that after the program, they felt more encouraged to discuss topics and solve problems. After the program, they felt significantly more knowledgeable in many skills, as well as more able to teach others and participate in decision making. They felt more independent with their learning, as well as ensuring that all members are included. Finally, at the end of the program, youth felt more supported by adults.

Lifelong Learning KPI

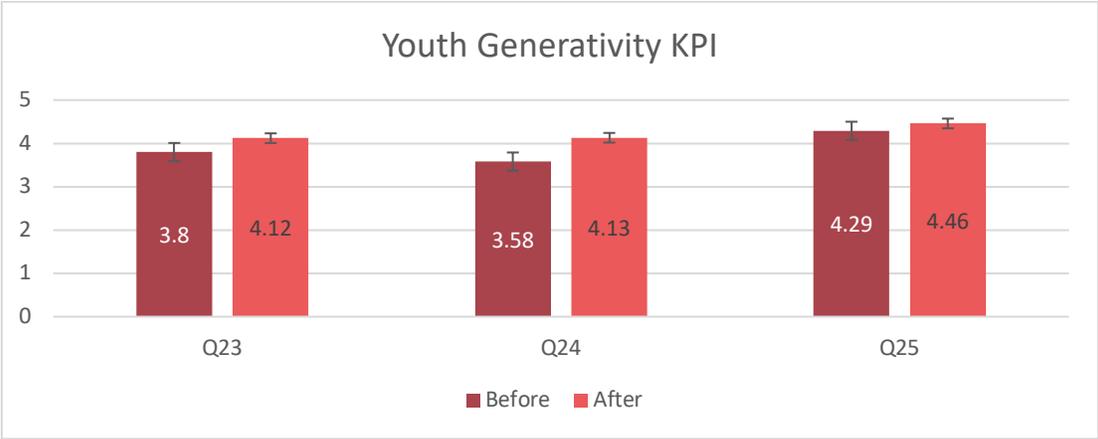


| Lifelong Learning KPI by Question | Before | After | Mean Difference | Significance |
|---|--------|-------|-----------------|--------------|
| 15. I expect to go on learning for a long time. | 4.05 | 4.32 | -0.268 | 0.006** |
| 16. I like to be able to improve the way I do things. | 4.12 | 4.41 | -0.293 | 0.006** |
| 17. I'm continually improving as a learner. | 3.98 | 4.44 | -0.463 | <.001** |
| 18. I don't like to accept an answer until I have worked it out for myself. | 3.61 | 3.8 | -0.195 | 0.103 |
| 19. I like to question the things I am learning. | 3.88 | 4.29 | -0.415 | 0.001** |
| 20. I like to learn about things that really matter to me. | 4.17 | 4.34 | -0.171 | 0.181 |
| 21. I like it when I can make connections between new things I am learning and things I already know. | 4.05 | 4.54 | -0.488 | 0.002** |
| 22. I like learning new things when I can see how they make sense for my life. | 3.95 | 4.22 | -0.275 | 0.078 |

Takeaway: Youth scored statistically significantly higher on many questions when asked about their feelings after the program when compared to before. Youth felt they were more likely to continue

learning as well as improving themselves in the future. They also were more likely to question the things they are learning and are more interested in making connections in their knowledge.

Youth Generativity KPI



| Youth Generativity KPI by Question | Before | After | Mean Difference | Significance |
|--|--------|-------|-----------------|--------------|
| 23. I have knowledge and skills that I will pass on to others. | 3.8 | 4.12 | -0.317 | 0.026** |
| 24. I think about ways to help others become leaders. | 3.58 | 4.13 | -0.55 | 0.007** |
| 25. I feel it is important to help people younger than myself. | 4.29 | 4.46 | -0.171 | 0.241 |

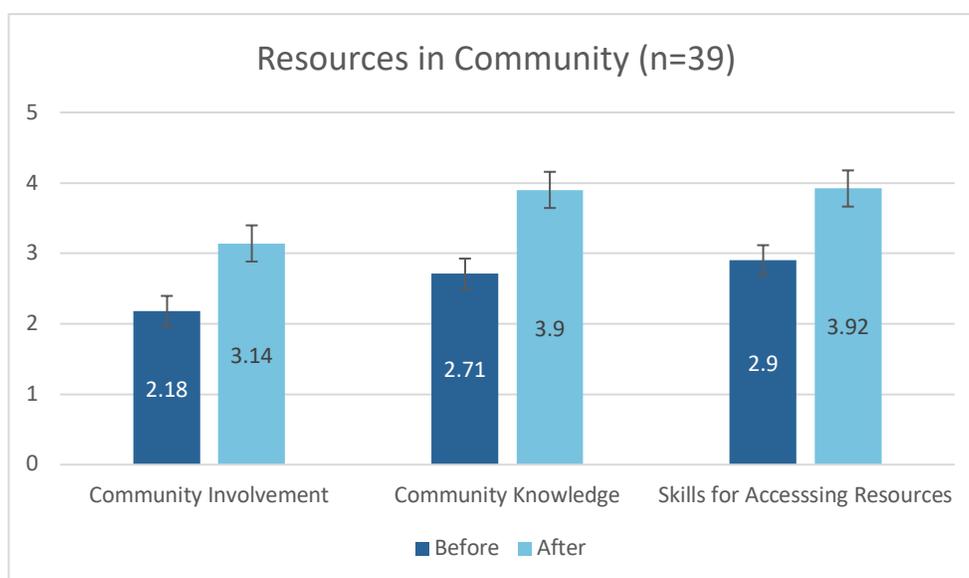
Takeaway: Youth believed that after the program, they had significantly more knowledge and skills to pass on to others in their community. They also scored significantly higher post-program on their ability to think about ways to help others become leaders.

Quantitative Results – Resources in Community

The **Resources in the Community** module contains 11 items that youth may rate from “Not at all” (1) to “Completely” (5). These statements are divided into three components related to different aspects of resources: **Community Involvement** (is the individual taking part in the resources?), **Community Knowledge** (does the individual know about the resources or how to find them?), and **Skills for Assessing Resources** (one’s capacity to find and/or take part in the resources).

This module was post-retrospective. This method allows us to explore participants self-reported change during and/or after a program. Youth were invited to fill this module after several months of participation in the program. For each statement, they rated their agreement at the beginning of the program, and at the moment. (see Appendix B for the results on each question).

The following graph presents the average of each component (KPI), which were statistically analyzed.



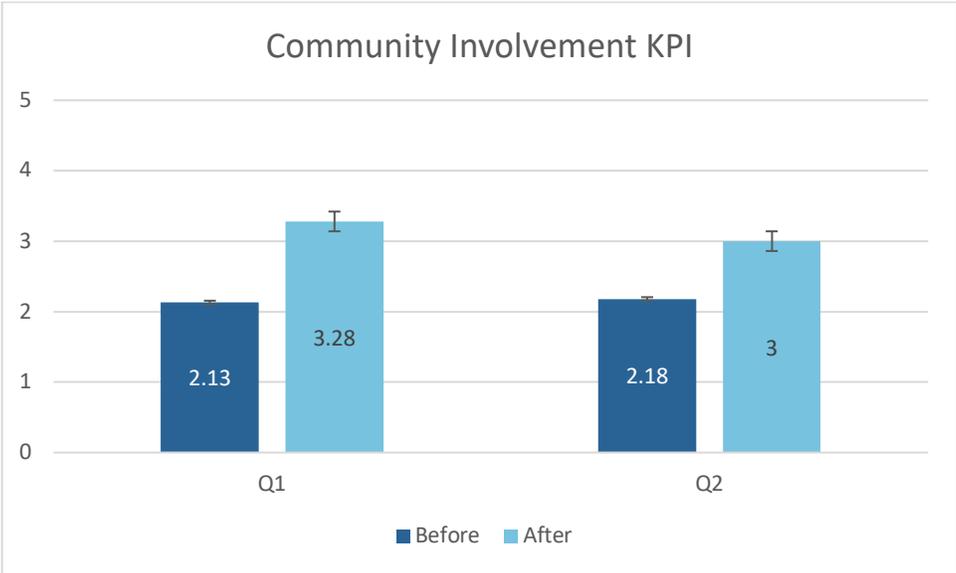
| KPI | Before | After | Mean Difference | Significance |
|--------------------------------|--------|-------|-----------------|--------------|
| Community Involvement | 2.18 | 3.14 | -0.96 | <.001** |
| Community Knowledge | 2.71 | 3.9 | -1.19 | <.001** |
| Skills for Accessing Resources | 2.9 | 3.92 | -1.02 | <.001** |

Takeaway: Overall, youth who participated in the Peer to Peer Leadership program self-reported increasing ability to navigate the resources available in the community. It seems like youth felt more involved in their community towards the end of the program than they were at the beginning. They also felt like they knew more about their community resources and are able to navigate and access them more easily. When statistically comparing the results, the t-tests³ revealed significant increases on all three components as well as on the overall results.

³ A t-test assesses whether the means of two groups are statistically different from each other. The larger the t-score, the more difference between the two groups.

These results were similar to what was observed in the programming year of 2019 and 2020. Youth who participated in this program in 2019 and 2020 also showed statistically significant increases on all the components and on the overall results. SLYE seems to be a valuable asset in connecting youth with the various resources throughout the years.

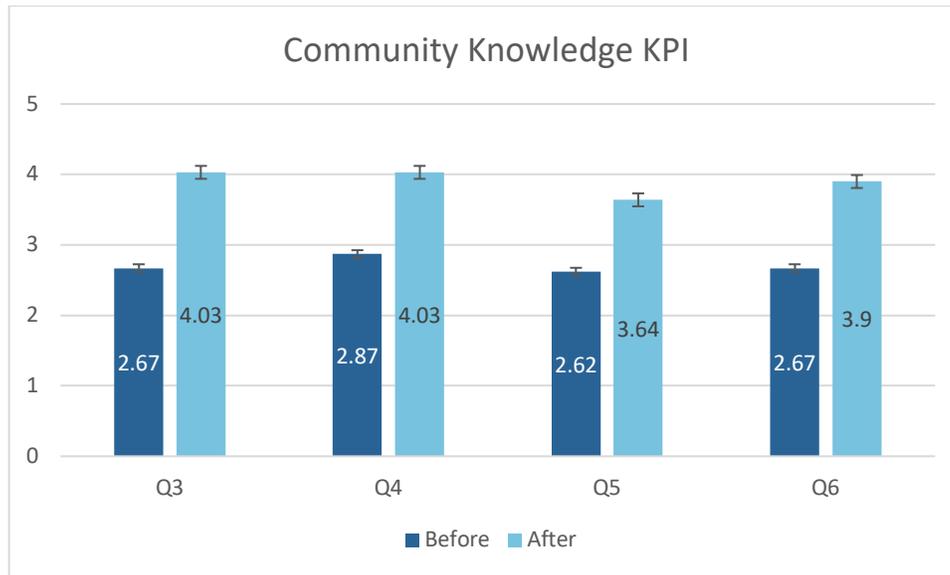
Community Involvement KPI



| Question | Before | After | Mean Difference | Significance |
|--|--------|-------|-----------------|--------------|
| 1. You know where to volunteer in your community. | 2.13 | 3.28 | -1.154 | <.001** |
| 2. You are a person who tells others about your community. | 2.18 | 3 | -0.816 | <.001** |

Takeaway: Youth participants scored statistically significantly higher on both questions of the Community Involvement KPI. This suggests that over the course of the program, youth felt increasingly able to volunteer in the community, while also telling others about their community.

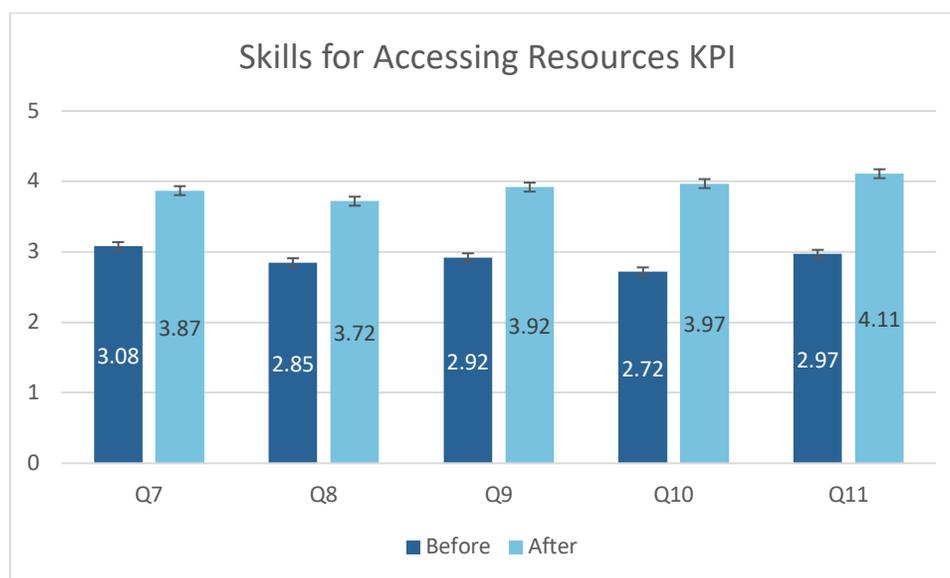
Community Knowledge KPI



| Question | Before | After | Mean Difference | Significance |
|---|--------|-------|-----------------|--------------|
| 3. I know where to get information about programs in my community. | 2.67 | 4.03 | -1.36 | <.001** |
| 4. There are organizations in my community that I can go to for help. | 2.87 | 4.03 | -1.15 | <.001** |
| 5. I often give others advice about where and how to connect with organizations in the community. | 2.62 | 3.64 | -1.02 | <.001** |
| 6. I know someone who would help me find and access resources and opportunities in my community. | 2.67 | 3.9 | -1.23 | <.001** |

Takeaway: Youth also scored statistically significantly higher on all questions of the Community Knowledge KPI. Throughout the duration of the program, youth learned where to get information about community involvement, as well as the presence of community organizations. They also felt increasingly confident about resources to seek out when help was needed, as well as how to connect others with difference resources.

Skills for Accessing Resources KPI



| Question | Before | After | Mean Difference | Significance |
|--|--------|-------|-----------------|--------------|
| 7. I feel comfortable communicating with other individuals in my community. | 3.08 | 3.87 | -0.79 | <.001** |
| 8. I feel comfortable communicating with other organizations in my community. | 2.85 | 3.72 | -0.87 | <.001** |
| 9. I can easily find and access the community support or service I need (such as education, health services, housing support, counseling). | 2.92 | 3.92 | -1 | <.001** |
| 10. I can easily find opportunities that interest me in my community. | 2.72 | 3.97 | -1.25 | <.001** |
| 11. If I'm interested in joining a community program (e.g. volunteer, activity, sports, religious, etc.), I know how to do so. | 2.97 | 4.11 | -1.13 | <.001** |

Takeaway: Consistent with the previous KPI's, youth scored statistically significantly higher on each question when rating themselves after as opposed to before the program. Youth felt increasing comfortable communicating with individuals and organizations, as well as the ability to find and access support or services. They also were significantly more interested in joining community programs after their participation.

Qualitative Results – Peer 2 Peer Focus Groups

Two focus groups consisted of youth participants from the P2P Leadership program. These focus groups allowed youth to share and discuss their experiences with the SLYE Network. Their comments have been analyzed for key themes that emerged, and approximate counts for each theme are presented. Some direct quotes from participants were also included.

Program Qualities

Positive Experiences (11)

Participants described the SLYE Network program as an amazing program where they were able to enjoy themselves and have fun.

And what I like best about this program is the fact that it's a very easy and a fun way to earn volunteer hours.

My involvement in the project this year was very fun.

I like how they made the meetings informational while being fun and interactive at the same time.

I just started with SLYE but it's really good.

Safe Environment (6)

SLYE Network was also portrayed as a safe and supportive environment. Participants believed that the leaders were very friendly and welcoming, while also providing a support system for youth throughout the pandemic.

This program made me feel pretty supported. Because, you know, the pandemic made everything, like, it was just this monotonous, boring, like, day-to-day life, and I hated it. And then I see... I saw this program, and it was interesting, and my first... my first leadership like program, my first day there it was, like, this whole new fresh thing. And then it's like, it was different then it was nice to have that for the whole month. And so yeah, they make me feel pretty supported. And through attending other workshops, I also felt supported.

It's also a safe space.

I would say I feel very supported.

New Opportunities (17)

The SLYE Network program was said to provide numerous opportunities for youth, specifically around volunteering and activities. Youth believed that SLYE gave them the opportunity to volunteer, talk to people, as well as get involved with other friendly interactions.

There's more opportunities for us generation... us kids and like, for the generation, so many volunteer hours, or you know, just needed time to talk to someone.

My group topic for the training was volunteer and leadership, and I actually learned about a few volunteer opportunities that I found interest in myself.

My favorite parts are like the opportunities they give for Kahoot games and the interaction with the like, friendly hosts, and stuff.

Youth also believed that the SLYE Network program provided new opportunities for learning and knowledge capacity building. Specifically, youth learned information from roadshow events, as well as being taught about consent, relationships, education, and employment.

I learned new stuff about the roadshow events that SLYE puts on like, you know about body, our color, and why we matter, and so on. It's such, it's better through visual contacts as I could join any meetings as even if I went outside.

The three agencies we had, they had, like so much information, and I'm thinking maybe even to volunteer at one of them.

I learned about a lot of things like consent, good and bad relationships, leadership, volunteering, how to get a job, tips about interviews, and many more through their meetings.

In each one I learned something new.

Youth Engagement (4)

Youth were very engaged throughout the program, as they were involved in meaningful conversations and felt comfortable participating. They felt as though they could use their voice and join many meetings.

I think my favorite part was the peer-to-peer talks, like, they have like, these two different sessions where you like, get to ask your questions, and then other peers will answer them for you. It was very engaging and the topics that were talked about were very good and interesting.

Diversity (4)

Participants believed that SLYE was a diverse environment where all races, sexual orientations, and religions were welcomed. It was described as a positive, safe environment where everyone felt comfortable expressing their opinions.

It makes definitely a positive impact with many other youths mainly because it's diverse, it's inviting, it's welcoming.

SLYE is also very welcoming of all races, sexual orientations, and religions, which makes people feel more comfortable in these programs.

Individual Outcomes

New Skills & Knowledge (17)

Participants discussed the skills learned throughout their time in the SLYE program, particularly surrounding job/employment knowledge. They were able to use resources provided to search for jobs in the community, as well as how to write resumes, interview well, and prepare for employment.

I guess would be like attending a lot of their roadshows, in like their employment roadshows and learning how to like prepare for employment, like writing resumes, and practicing for interviews.

Participants also gained leadership skills, as they were taught to facilitate others and use their strengths to benefit the community. They noted that the leadership training was very beneficial in learning how to become an effective leader.

I got to learn more about my strengths and how to be a better leader through their leadership training program.

The leadership training personally helped me gain leadership skills that I can use in order to help better my community.

Communication skills were also taught within the program, as youth believed that they were able to better communicate over virtual platforms, as well as communicate effectively in a team setting.

Communication skills and work with the team, which expanded my teamwork skills as well.

I learned to actually talk as well, because oftentimes, I join like these zoom calls, and I just sit there, listen to people, rather than talk. So I've learned how to like engage in those over Zoom and stuff.

Through their participation with SLYE, youth also saw improvements in their organization skills. Youth felt that they were better able to manage their time and organize their schedule in order to participate in events.

I've learned time management, like how to better time manage myself.

I definitely have better time management skills since then, and I find myself participating in more events.

I started caring about myself through my volunteer hours. Like, I need to get this done ASAP. I need to finish this. I got more organized with SLYE.

Personal Growth (7)

Participants grew within themselves throughout the SLYE program, as they paid attention to self-care and stress management. They believed that the SLYE program helped them to become better versions of themselves, and in turn, helping the community. One participant also noted how the program allowed them to strengthen their extrovert skills, enabling them to feel more confident.

So becoming more of an extrovert, that is mainly through one of my favorite parts of SLYE is their leadership programs where I was able to host a workshop which I've done twice with them, and I plan to do a few more of those.

It's like a power and a strength within me that I didn't know.

They increase our mental well-being and I suppose through those lessons, it helps us individuals become better people and in turn, it helps us become a better community.

Social Outcomes

Program Connectedness (14)

Participants spoke about the connection within the program, as SLYE enabled many youth to meet new friends and create new relationships.

My favorite part was the roadshow planning, and like making new friends.

I met like a lot of new people, which I would never meet. And you get to learn a lot from new people.

I like getting the chance to talk to other kids my age and the chance to participate in a group project that wasn't school-related and making friends.

Along with meeting new friends, participants also grew existing relationships and became closer with other individuals.

It was such, it's like I bonded with those people that I didn't know, now we're like a family.

So I made that bond, we may love [08:40]. It was everything.

Relationship Skills and Knowledge (6)

Along with gaining new relationships, participants also developed new relationship skills and knowledge. Youth were able to learn about others in the program, as well as develop collaboration skills as they worked together on numerous activities.

My favorite parts were like the icebreakers in the beginning where you get to learn about other people.

I liked the icebreakers because I got to know about the other people in the sessions.

You get to meet a lot of new people in this, which is pretty good for your like internal collaboration skills, it helps build good collaboration skills.

System/Community Outcomes

Resources in Community (8)

Participants discussed how the SLYE program increased their access to resources in the community. The program provided them with knowledge, awareness, and options in terms of community programs and workshops.

Knowledge is power and the resources they provide us with are empowering and they provide a lot of resources out there about different topics ranging from like employment to leadership and stuff.

What leads to positive changes as a result of these programs by SLYE is just the amount of resources and information and like educational programs that they run.

It provides a lot of resources and supports for youth.

SLYE does provide a lot of resources that helped me personally feel supported during this time.

Connection to Community (10)

The SLYE program fostered connections within the community and within the program. Youth felt involved in their community (e.g., through volunteering and employment), as well as assisted them to explore other organizations. Youth also believed that SLYE allowed them to serve their community better and feel proud within themselves.

I would say it helped me definitely to get involved in the community a lot more than I expected, mainly because I attended a lot of employment and volunteering roadshows, which were able to provide a lot of different opportunities in the community that helped me explore them, especially some employment opportunities that they provided, which I'm currently looking into.

I use what I learned from SLYE and these workshops in my interactions with others, to be a better individual and serve my community better.

It's helped me to explore other organizations, and then also volunteer a lot more, be more engaged in my community.

Teaching us how to spread like our wings, and make a positive impact in our community through the skills and the info that we learn at the roadshow. So it's not like you attend a roadshow and you're done, it's like you continue your learning journey through SLYE, through other organizations. And then you can even use what you've gained and spread it across your community.

Sociopolitical Control (1)

One participant also spoke about SLYE's focus on awareness of current relevant topics that are important to you (e.g., LGBTQ2S+ community).

SLYE hosts a lot of mental health roadshows, as well as like LGBTQ+, and then just a bunch of Roadshows, focusing on like current topics that are important to youth, to help expand our learning journeys, help teach us a lot that we usually don't know, like, a lot of info.

Challenges

Participants touched upon some challenges that were faced throughout the year, specifically surrounding the communication during virtual learning as well as attendance.

One challenge I saw was like, communicating with team members like sometimes you weren't able to get an instant response from team members. So that caused a bit of delay in the work being done.

I did experience a few inconveniences with people unable to attend meetings or the Roadshow and people join the team late and having to catch them up.

Recommendations

Participants had many recommendations for future years at SLYE, the most common one being more volunteer opportunities and workshops tailored to more specific topics. For example, youth were interested in more workshops focused on the LGBTQ2S+ community, interview skills, leadership training, and education (e.g., post-secondary school, studying tips).

I would like to see more volunteering opportunities, like for reference like leadership trainings, and like any other workshops.

How to like make resumes or how to prepare for an interview, or like anything that would help me in the future like to get jobs.

Probably more, like workshops to do with LGBTQ+, because when I participated in one, I really liked it, and it was like very comforting.

I would like to see more programs regarding school, like time management, studying tips, post-secondary school, etc., and programs regarding employment, like managing school and a job, how to find employment, job interviews, etc.

Participants also had suggestions around program organization, specifically regarding more meeting flexibility and length. They suggested that meetings should have more variety and at a later time to be more accessible to all participants. They also felt that longer meetings would allow for more participation and engagement where youth are not rushed. On a similar note, one participant suggested reminder emails and more communication, as well as a suggestion box to enhance engagement in the program.

SLYE could be more flexible when they place their meetings because usually, they place it during four o'clock, 4:30 sometimes, it might be better to place it at a later time perhaps. Just like more variety in when meetings come and go.

I feel like they could make some of their roadshows, like longer, like maybe an extra half hour long, only because like I notice a lot of the time at the Roadshows, they're always rushing to give the information or they rush into the roadshow, lots of lots of the time, it usually goes overboard.

When there's time for like youth participation, usually they're unable to respond to all of the youth or pay attention to all the youth because they don't have a lot of time, so they're kind of rushing it. And then also like, the same applies to like the leadership program, where we're only granted an hour to present a roadshow, I feel like they could give like an hour and a half.

If they sent out like reminder emails, like an hour or two before the email did have more people show up that register. Because like, personally, like I... like especially with school, I forget sometimes that I registered for a meeting or a workshop or something. And if I had like, notification, an email notification saying, "Oh, you have a meeting from SLYE," then I would obviously join because I was interested when I registered.

I feel like they could have like a suggestion box or suggestion form for the youth who attend their Roadshows, to ask us what topics we would like to see them do for new Roadshows because I feel like sometimes it's a little bit repetitive.

Qualitative Results – Youth Council and Placement Students

One focus group consisted of youth council members and post-secondary placement students at SLYE. This focus group allowed them to share and discuss their experiences with the SLYE program. Their comments have been analyzed for key themes that emerged, and approximate counts for each theme are presented. Some direct quotes from participants were also included.

Program Qualities

Positive Experiences (5)

Students within the program suggested that SLYE was an appropriate space where they had an enjoyable experience.

I think generally, this year has been a pretty positive experience with SLYE. I felt like I was always supported with [name] and with [name], our youth worker, and just with the other interns as well. I honestly had a really great time.

So energetic and enthusiastic with everybody, that I feel like that also rubs off on you and makes you excited to be there and help out with everybody in the work that you're doing.

Safe Environment (11)

Students spoke about the non-judgmental atmosphere of the program. Specifically, they felt that the program fostered a space where youth were not penalized for their amount of participation. Youth were not judged based on their comfort level and that they were not pressured to respond.

Not everyone wants to respond and that's okay. It's normal and should be accepted. I don't want to push anyone, make them feel pressured to do so.

Participants also believed that the program was both safe and supportive to youth. Students ensured that youth felt safe within the program, while also supporting them throughout their participation. Students believed that they were a support system for youth throughout the pandemic, where youth were able to lean on them through rough times. To better support youth, students also prioritized finding more events and opportunities for youth to participate in.

We hosted a lot of events, supported a lot of youth with roadshows, and just in general, helping the youth feel better and safer especially in times like these when they're so isolated and they don't see a lot of people or socialize a lot.

I feel like we've been one of those support systems where we're able to help them through these rough times.

It's been a bit busy at SLYE trying to come up with more events and opportunities for youth so they feel more supported.

Supporting the youth is just our main goal and that's gone really good so far.

New Opportunities (5)

Students spoke about the number of opportunities provided to both themselves and to youth. They believe that SLYE allows youth to grow while giving them opportunities to get involved in their community. Furthermore, it gave students the opportunity to work directly with youth and accomplish learning goals.

I did remember what the roadshows were all about and what they looked like, and I remembered how energetic and fancy and exciting it was to see all the opportunities that were offered from SLYE.

Similar to what [participant 6] is saying, we're definitely engaging with our youth positively and providing opportunities to connect to other agencies, and also just giving them opportunities for volunteer hours definitely is one of them. Even when I was in high school, I had to constantly get in volunteer hours and that was in person. It's definitely going to be a challenge for youth today not being able to find the hours outside of SLYE so we're definitely providing those opportunities for them and just providing opportunities for leadership skills which are obviously important for them.

It's like we're both learning together and I just think that's one of the biggest accomplishments for me on a personal level that I got from this opportunity both last year and this year.

Youth Engagement (6)

Students also believed that the program fostered meaningful engagement for participants, as they felt comfortable to participate to their full extent. They believed that the program gave youth a voice to express their opinions and be included in the community. Students thought that SLYE had a positive impact empowering youth to have their voices heard and feedback taken seriously.

To see SLYE make sure that the young voices are included in their community and in the decisions of their community is always something that I really felt was really powerful. I felt that I wish I was more connected to that, being a high school.

One of the biggest changes that I really admired about SLYE and I think has the most positive impact is empowering youth and including them and their voices and their say.

We always make changes to our program based off the feedback that the youth provide us with so we know what the youth want. I think that's also what's a positive thing about SLYE and how we can always change their program based off what they want, what they need. We just base it off of how we can best support them.

Individual Outcomes

New Skills & Knowledge (7)

Students spoke about the skills learned throughout the program for both youth and students. They especially noticed an increase in youth's leadership skills, while also developing these skills themselves.

We're able to help them develop new leadership skills.

I felt like I was able to develop a lot of skills like facilitating workshops which I thought was a really good one because I haven't had too much experience doing that with a group of people.

Students also noticed that they gained effective communication skills throughout their time facilitating in the program.

That was definitely something that I was able to develop over this semester, along with just hosting workshops and communicating with our youth.

Public speaking and then just effective communication.

Personal Growth (12)

Students spoke about their ability to achieve their goals and accomplish tasks beyond their original scope.

I guess just highlights and achievements, like [name] and [name] said, the personal achievements and goals, honestly, before working at SLYE, I'm speaking from the beginning also, I was more of a shy person who didn't really like presentations a lot but then now, this opportunity certainly helped me build a lot of those skills like public speaking.

Being able to meet our goals and also go beyond that. I think that has been the highlight for me, major achievements for us collectively.

I think that's a huge highlight and accomplishment. Shout out to our team today. We keep pushing through and we keep meeting new milestones.

Students also thought that through role modeling, they were able to increase their own confidence facilitating and felt more comfortable in a leadership position.

After that, I was able to practice how confident I was, in my own roadshow facilitation that I found that I guess I overthought a little bit too much and that I was better at facilitating with my camera on and mic on and engaging than I thought.

Finally, students spoke about the adaptability of the program throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. They praised all participants in the program with their ability to adapt to circumstances and continue providing programming to youth. Students and other facilitators were able to adapt to an online environment and still meet targets and connect with youth.

We were able to be very proactive. I think two weeks into the lockdown was when we started our programming and by six months in, a lot of organizations were reaching out to us and asking, "How did you do it?"

As you may know, we are an OTF-funded organization and we have targets to meet. Not only were we able to meet those targets, but also be able to connect with the youth in meaningful ways.

I think the space really has been inspired by that and our ability to adapt to different environments and support youth where they need the most support.

Social Outcomes

Program Connectedness (17)

Students believed that the SLYE program will enable all participants to connect with others and meet new people once programming returns to in-person.

I hope to meet the youth in person and actually get to know them face to face.

Along with meeting new people, students believe that lasting relationships were formed between participants in the program. Students also spoke towards the cohesive nature between facilitators and youth, as students supported youth and worked together to meet goals.

We're pretty involved with the youth which made me more interested in being a part of it, and that was one of my main goals. It's just to work close with the youth and get to know them and work with them.

Just to add on to that, I think the people definitely stands out. The fact that we are able to work together so cohesively and support each other.

Throughout these relationships, students believed that the program empowered youth with encouragement and support.

Excited actually having the opportunity to work with them and see all the work they do with the youth and have that experience like the other interns said. Being able to actually talk to them even though we're in a virtual space.

when I saw the description and the background of what SLYE actually does, it echoes everything everyone else said about how it empowers youth.

the youth inspire us and their dedication, their resiliency, was what stood out to me. I remember doing a bunch of roadshows. I think we were doing trainings three times a week just because we wanted to make sure we were there for the youth, right?

I think empowering youth is definitely a priority.

System Outcomes

Resources in Community (12)

Students spoke towards the reach that SLYE is having on the community, as they continue to grow their networks and make more opportunities for youth.

In terms of achieving our priority, which is ensuring that we are providing leadership opportunities for our youth, 1250 youth I think per year is the expectation from OTF. We're definitely reaching out to as many youth as possible. We're also connecting virtually with different schools and providing that experience with different schools as well, so we're definitely getting there.

We are prioritizing youth that are maybe far away from these opportunities. Ensuring that we are reaching out the different youth is our priority and we are, I think, on the right track.

Students also discussed how youth are able to access more resources in the community. The program helps to support youth by giving them the tools and resources they need, while also connecting them with difference agencies

Positively though, we're able to reach out to more youth. We don't have to meet in person which means we can reach out to more people around Ontario because I think SLYE's only Toronto-based. But because we moved to virtual, we're able to meet with more youth not just around not just Ontario but Toronto so that's really good. We're able to support more youth so that's great.

It has increased the accessibility of our programming, ensuring that we're able to reach youth wherever they're at and also whatever time is most flexible for them. I think there's definitely some challenges along the equity parts of being online.

I was mostly happy of the fact that they were able to recommend services [00:09:21 inaudible] give their information and we're able to learn from them and I can learn from them as well.

They were able to provide services for the youth that can benefit them.

Finding ways to support them and giving them tools and resources for them to support themselves as well through our roadshows by connecting them with agencies and trying to help them figure out how they can get involved within other organizations.

Challenges

Students expressed a few challenges faced throughout their participation. The main challenge surrounded youth's zoom participation. Although it is understandable that youth struggled with zoom fatigue, students struggled with youth engagement.

Work in actual workshops with the youth, not just through the camera, because it's difficult right now to even talk to the youth through Zoom because they just don't really talk much.

To add on, mine is similar in the sense that it does have to do with it being online that sometimes I found out when I was hosting my roadshow planning meetings with my groups, there would be minimal engagement from them and it was really hard to hold a conversation if no one was really responding.

Students also spoke about their leadership abilities in a virtual world, explaining that it was tough to speak to youth through a camera.

The major challenge was being comfortable on camera and speaking to a youth group that I wasn't sure how they would be reacting because I talk to them.

Another challenge mentioned was the ability to find agencies for roadshows.

I think I can speak for all of us, one of our challenges this year was finding agencies for our Roadshows.

Recommendations/Future Goals

Students hoped for more sustainability and funding in the future in order to provide more opportunities for youth. More funding would also allow for expansion of the team and make even a larger impact on youth.

A huge goal for me personally is to see the sustainability of SLYE continue and see new horizons. For example, we are in the last year of our funding, OTF funding, so I hope to see us getting more grants and providing opportunities for our youth in different platforms in different ways and just being able to work.

In terms of staffing, we only have one full time staff and part time staff and we really appreciate our interns, but being able to see expanding that team and being able to reach out to even more youth would be a priority that I would see and hopefully would be able to do. So funding would definitely be. More funding.

Conclusion

The purpose of this report was to gain a greater understanding of how youth are engaged SLYE's Peer to Peer (P2P) Leadership program, as well as to understand the impact of this pandemic on the participants.

In the Preparing to Lead module, youth reported good levels of leadership skills, and felt an improvement in those skills throughout the year. Youth reported feeling more engaged, wanting to learn more, and wanting to leave a legacy to future generation even more by the end. Interestingly, this year's results were similar to the last two years, even with the shift from in-person to virtual programming.

In the Resources in Community module, youth reported knowing their community well and knowing how to access the resources that are available to them. They also reported a significant increase in these skills to access and navigate the resources of their community.

This consistency across the years suggests that, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the SLYE Network was able to create a space that allowed youth to learn and to develop their skills. These results give evidence that SLYE was able to successfully transition their activities in the virtual world, without comprising the effectiveness and integrity of the program. This was also a large topic in the focus group with placement students and youth council members, as students spoke towards the programs ability to adapt very well in a new environment.

According to what youth mentioned during the focus groups, they also appreciated the effort made by SLYE to transition and keep the program running. Youth felt safe, engaged, and welcomed within the program, while learning numerous skills and experiencing personal growth. Youth developed lasting relationships and were able to access resources and opportunities within the community.

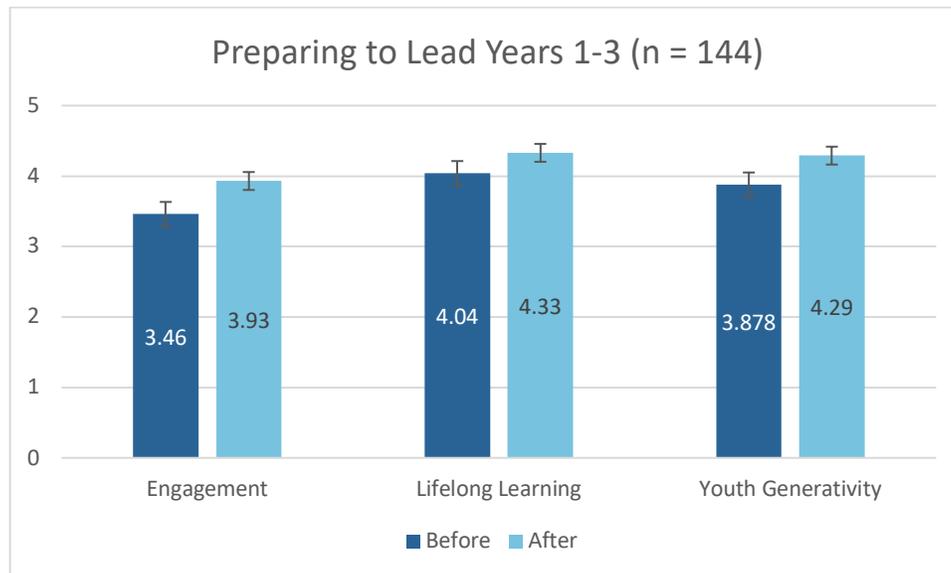
Placement students also spoke to their experience in the program, suggesting that it was also a safe and supportive atmosphere for youth. They believed that youth were given the opportunity to have a voice in their community, as their engagement was encouraged. Students learned new skills in terms of their leadership, as well as increasing their confidence facilitating. They thoroughly enjoyed the collaborative nature of the program, describing it as a program fostering connection and relationships. They believed that youth had many opportunities to access resources in the community and were able to growth their networks.

All of the results presented in this report suggest that SLYE has continuously provided a positive program for youth, before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additional opportunities for youth to share their stories of the program will offer a deeper examination of the individual, social, and system level changes that may be occurring as a result of the program and the process. Our recommendation is to discuss the present results with youth in the community to see if this data portrays what they are experiencing.

Appendix

A – Preparing to Lead Before Program vs. After Program (Years 1-3 Combined)

By Key Performance Indicator



| KPI | Before | After | Mean Difference | Significance |
|--------------------|--------|-------|-----------------|--------------|
| Engagement | 3.46 | 3.93 | -0.47484 | <.001 |
| Lifelong Learning | 4.04 | 4.33 | -0.2894 | <.001 |
| Youth Generativity | 3.878 | 4.29 | -0.41432 | <.001 |

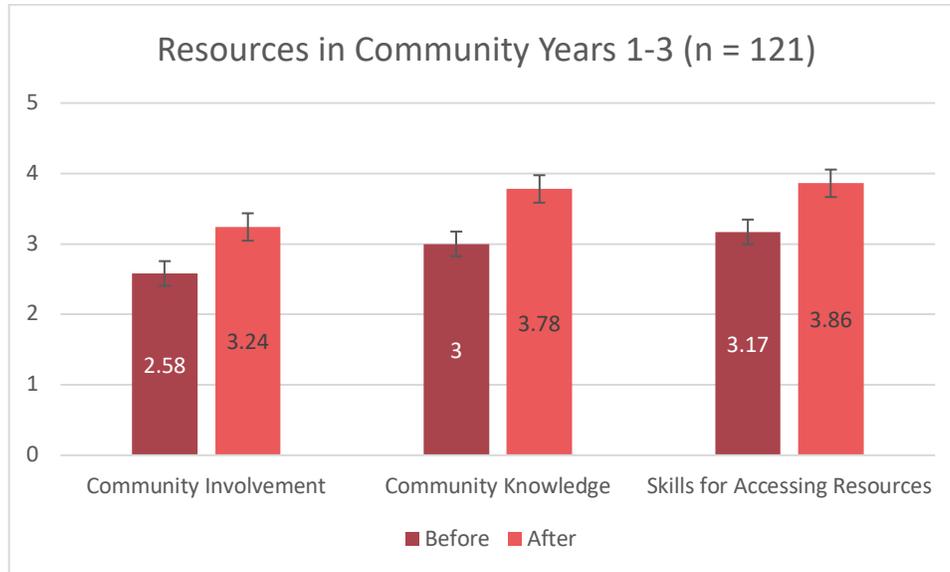
By Question

| Question | Before | After | Mean Difference | Significance |
|--|--------|-------|-----------------|--------------|
| I am asked for input about what activities I would like to do before activities are planned. | 3.42 | 3.74 | -0.324 | <.001** |
| Adults do not make negative assumptions about me. | 3.25 | 3.4 | -0.156 | 0.044** |
| Adults talk to me in ways that I can understand and am comfortable with. | 3.86 | 4.05 | -0.191 | 0.005** |
| I am encouraged to discuss things and ask questions to others. | 3.55 | 4.12 | -0.569 | <.001** |
| I am encouraged and supported to solve problems in new ways. | 3.61 | 4.09 | -0.478 | <.001** |
| I am learning new skills. | 3.47 | 4.2 | -0.73 | <.001** |
| I feel like adults and peers are learning from me. | 3.01 | 3.59 | -0.582 | <.001** |
| I participate in the decisions about group activities. | 3.39 | 4.06 | -0.667 | <.001** |
| I participate in setting group rules and guidelines. | 3.32 | 3.84 | -0.514 | <.001** |

| | | | | |
|--|------|------|--------|---------|
| If youth want to do an activity that for some reason isn't appropriate, we are told right away and given an explanation of the reasons why. | 3.51 | 3.95 | -0.439 | <.001** |
| I have opportunities to learn on my own (e.g. adults start a discussion with me about issues so that I can figure it out on my own rather than telling me what to do). | 3.49 | 3.92 | -0.429 | <.001** |
| I make sure that all group members have a say in laying out our purposes, expectations, motivations and roles. | 3.8 | 4.19 | -0.396 | <.001** |
| I am involved in discussing issues of respects, conflict, or discipline. | 3.54 | 4.01 | -0.472 | <.001** |
| Adults support me without being condescending or assuming that I need or want their help. | 3.46 | 3.86 | -0.399 | <.001** |
| I expect to go on learning for a long time. | 4.11 | 4.36 | -0.254 | <.001** |
| I like to be able to improve the way I do things. | 4.2 | 4.49 | -0.289 | <.001** |
| I'm continually improving as a learner. | 4.07 | 4.47 | -0.397 | <.001** |
| I don't like to accept an answer until I have worked it out for myself. | 3.61 | 3.9 | -0.293 | <.001** |
| I like to question the things I am learning. | 3.75 | 4.09 | -0.34 | <.001** |
| I like to learn about things that really matter to me. | 4.32 | 4.5 | -0.176 | 0.005** |
| I like it when I can make connections between new things I am learning and things I already know. | 4.14 | 4.44 | -0.303 | <.001** |
| I like learning new things when I can see how they make sense for my life. | 4.09 | 4.36 | -0.271 | 0.001** |
| I expect to go on learning for a long time. | 3.78 | 4.22 | -0.437 | <.001** |
| I like to be able to improve the way I do things. | 3.66 | 4.19 | -0.536 | <.001** |
| I'm continually improving as a learner. | 4.18 | 4.48 | -0.298 | <.001** |

B – Resources in Community Before Program vs. After Program (Years 1-3 Combined)

By Key Performance Indicator



| KPI | Before | After | Mean Difference | Significance |
|--------------------------------|--------|-------|-----------------|--------------|
| Community Involvement | 2.58 | 3.24 | -0.66529 | <.001 |
| Community Knowledge | 3 | 3.78 | -0.7803 | <.001 |
| Skills for Accessing Resources | 3.17 | 3.86 | -0.68375 | <.001 |

By Question

| Question | Before | After | Mean Difference | Significance |
|---|--------|-------|-----------------|--------------|
| 1. You know where to volunteer in your community. | 2.55 | 3.31 | -0.752 | <.001** |
| 2. You are a person who tells others about your community. | 2.61 | 3.17 | -0.559 | <.001** |
| 3. I know where to get information about programs in my community. | 3.05 | 4.01 | -0.958 | <.001** |
| 4. There are organizations in my community that I can go to for help. | 3.14 | 3.82 | -0.675 | <.001** |
| 5. I often give others advice about where and how to connect with organizations in the community. | 2.92 | 3.68 | -0.758 | <.001** |
| 6. I know someone who would help me find and access resources and opportunities in my community. | 2.92 | 3.67 | -0.75 | <.001** |
| 7. I feel comfortable communicating with other individuals in my community. | 3.28 | 3.95 | -0.667 | <.001** |
| 8. I feel comfortable communicating with other organizations in my community. | 3.01 | 3.7 | -0.689 | <.001** |

| | | | | |
|--|------|------|--------|---------|
| 9. I can easily find and access the community support or service I need (such as education, health services, housing support, counseling). | 3.2 | 3.89 | -0.689 | <.001** |
| 10. I can easily find opportunities that interest me in my community. | 2.99 | 3.87 | -0.875 | <.001** |
| 11. If I'm interested in joining a community program (e.g. volunteer, activity, sports, religious, etc.), I know how to do so. | 3.37 | 4.07 | -0.701 | <.001** |