

Agenda Gap Community Report

Foundry Abbotsford Pilot



Report prepared May 2025



Wellstream

• FOUNDRY •
WHERE WELLNESS TAKES SHAPE



Foundry Abbotsford Agenda Gap

In September 2024, the Agenda Gap team partnered with Foundry Abbotsford to pilot an on-site implementation of the program. The Agenda Gap team provided program materials, participant intake support, and facilitation training. The Foundry team recruited 15 interested youth from five Abbotsford high schools via their youth outreach program. Thirteen youth completed the program, attending weekly, in-person meetings after school at the Foundry centre from November 2024 to May 2025.

About Agenda Gap

Agenda Gap is a facilitated relationship & capacity-building program that centres the expertise of youth in identifying what fosters mental health in their communities. It is action-oriented & supports youth and their adult allies to engage with and influence **policy**. This process promotes their own mental health while also improving conditions that influence the mental health of their peers, families, communities, & society as a whole.

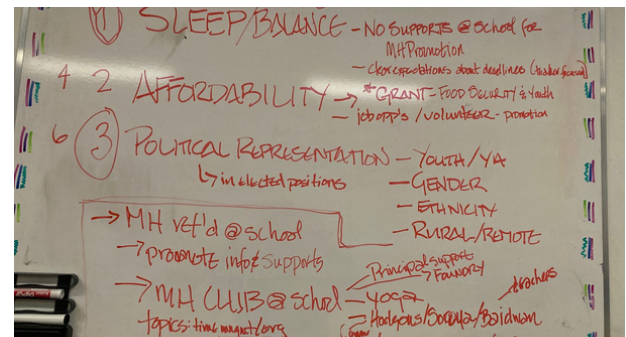
What the Foundry Agenda Gap Youth Accomplished:

Agenda Gap youth identified a range of strengths and challenges in their community related to youth mental health. To address two of these priority challenges, the group applied to the Public Health Agency of Canada's School Health Grants program. These micro-grants fund youth-driven projects that encourage healthy living in school settings. The group was successful in a grant to support their efforts related to affordable nutrition, and deliverables will be achieved with the support of the Agenda Gap and Foundry Abbotsford teams.

The group went on to develop a mission statement and refine their policy target, which focused on enhancing diversity in political representation, including by youth.

Mission Statement:

To empower youth in Abbotsford and across B.C. by advocating for stronger political representation and policies that support mental health and well-being. We believe young people should have a direct voice in shaping the decisions that impact their communities and personal lives, which is why we fight for a lower voting age and greater youth engagement in politics. Through activism and education, we work toward a future where youth leadership and advocacy drive a more just, equitable, and inclusive society.



Planning for Impact: Engaging with Allies

To inform their strategy, the group engaged with several allies, including Foundry staff and two young adults, one of whom is involved in provincial politics and the other who brings a long history of work to increase youth representation in political decision-making.

As a result, the youth focused their efforts on researching and drafting a call to action to the Premier of BC and the BC Special Committee on Democratic and Electoral Reform to advocate for extending the vote to those aged 16 and 17 (Appendix A). Their allies reviewed the letter, after which it was posted as an online petition to collect signatures. The campaign was advertised through posters at the five schools the youth attended. Their allies also amplified their petition on Vote16.ca and hand-delivered a copy of the letter to the Premier.

Introduction to Findings

To inform continuous program improvement and to better understand its impacts, all Agenda Gap participants are invited to take part in evaluation activities. This includes interviews, pre- and post-program surveys, and individual workshop assessments. ***This report summarizes key findings from the pre- and post-program surveys and the workshop assessments.***

Pre- & Post-Surveys

The pre-survey, completed by participants at the beginning of the program, and post-survey, taken by participants upon conclusion of the program, measure the following:

- Knowledge gains
- Policy-related achievements
- Personal impacts
- Positive relationships
- Changes to mental health
- Program reflections

See Appendix B for overview of survey measures.

Workshop Assessments

Youth participants are invited to complete an anonymous workshop assessment at the close of each session. They have the opportunity to rate their workshop experience, including what went well, offer compliments to other participants, and provide suggestions to improve future offerings. The results are shared with the youth during subsequent workshops and are used by the facilitation team to inform program refinement.

Pre- & Post-Survey Findings

Who participated?

Thirteen youth from five area high schools completed the program as well as pre- and post-surveys. Youth ranged in age from 14 – 17 years. The majority of participants identified as girls/women (93%) with 62% identifying as South Asian and 31% identifying as Southeast Asian.

Policy-Related Impacts

All participants reported that as a result of their involvement in Agenda Gap, they gained skills to:

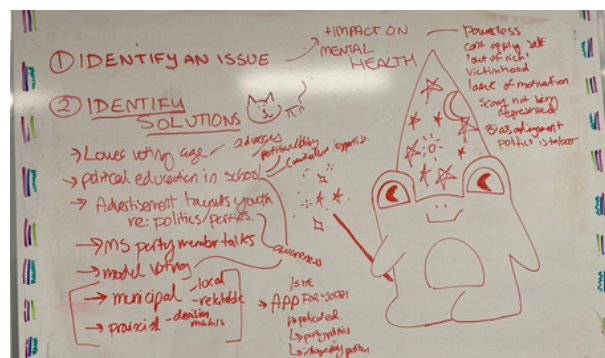
- work effectively in group settings where people have different perspectives
- identify and act on changes needed in their communities

Similarly, all participants reported that they felt more prepared to make change in their communities following the program, & learned about the social determinants of mental health & how they contribute to mental health inequities.

Nearly all of the youth (92%) reported that their involvement in the program increased their:

- knowledge of mental health promotion
- awareness of how policy can be used as a tool for promoting mental health

85% indicated they plan to keep working with others to contribute to policy change.



Priority Strategy

Pre- & Post-Survey Findings

Personal Impacts

Participants reported that their involvement in Agenda Gap resulted in a variety of positive personal impacts. Nearly all (92%) indicated that as a result of Agenda Gap:

- their positive mental health had improved
- they gained relationships that support their well-being

Over half (54%) indicated that they felt more connected to their schools and noticed improvements in how they relate to family.

Youth-Facilitator Relationships

Participants endorsed positive youth-facilitator relationships, which included a sense of mutual respect, trust, and co-learning. All participants reported that it was clear that youth and facilitators respected each other, that they learned a lot from program facilitators, that there was a good balance of power between youth and facilitators in the program, and that youth and facilitators trusted each other. Moreover, 85% felt that facilitators learned a lot from youth by participating in this program.

Measures of Mental Health and Well-being

A number of established scales were used to measure indicators of mental health among youth participants, including self-efficacy, well-being, motivation, and peer and adult support (Appendix B). Consistent with results from other Agenda Gap sites, scores improved across all scales following program participation (Figure 1).

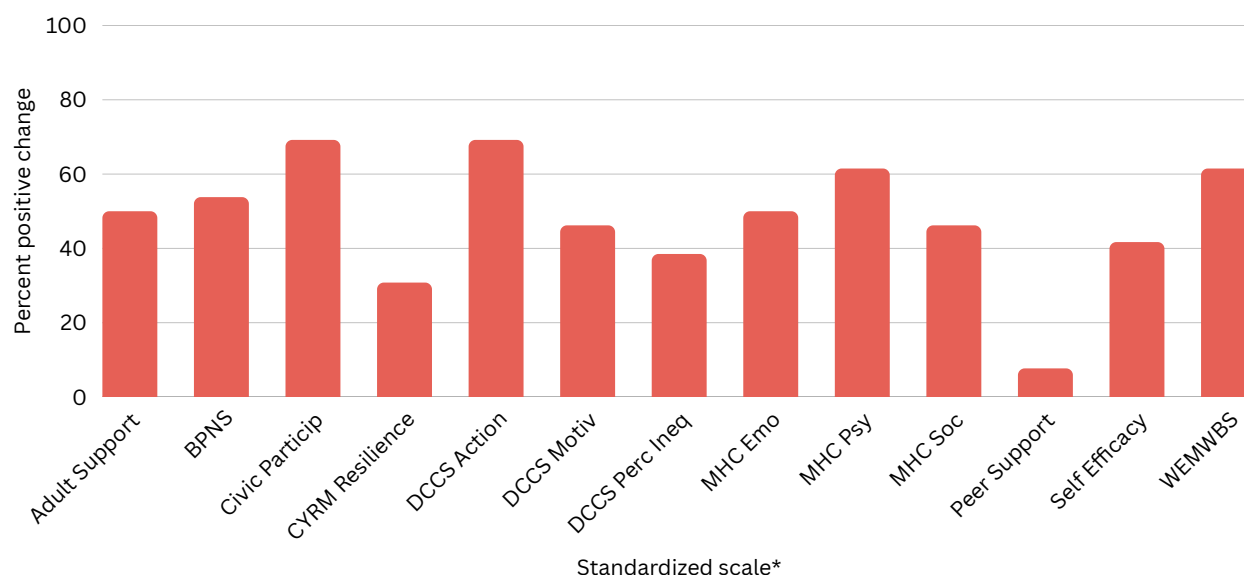


Figure 1. Percent positive change at post-survey on standardized mental health scales.

* See Appendix B for overview of survey measures.

Workshop Assessments

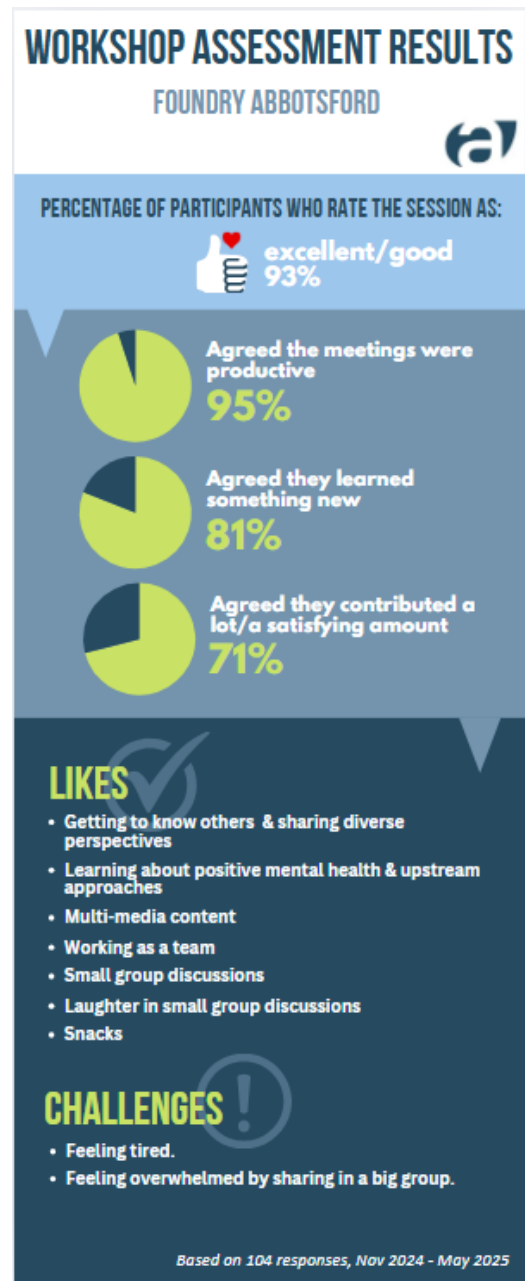
Over the course of 20 workshops, a total of 104 workshop assessment responses were collected. Of the participants who rated the sessions, 93% found them to be good/excellent. A total of 71% felt that they contributed during the sessions, 95% felt the meetings were productive, and 81% agreed they learned something new.

Open-Ended Responses

Open-ended questions embedded in the workshop assessments and post-survey allowed youth to elaborate on aspects of their Agenda Gap experience that were particularly impactful. Participants shared a variety of insights, including that Agenda Gap helped them feel more connected, skilled and aware of mental health issues and priorities.

"The workshops greatly encouraged me to approach mental health and many other things with a different perspective. The program also encouraged me to become more involved in my community and actively look for ways to support my own and others' well-being. I found myself doing things I would hesitate or not know about earlier."

"It helped me connect with people with the same ideas, or different ideas, that were seeking the same purpose or solution for an issue. I was also able to communicate with complete strangers and build relationships/connections, something that was extremely out of my comfort zone prior to this program."



Conclusion

This report presents highlights from data collected as part of an evaluation of the Agenda Gap program pilot with Foundry Abbotsford. Overall, the program was well-received and had a meaningful impact. All participants found Agenda Gap valuable, indicated they would contribute to policy change in the future, and shared personal gains they experienced through their involvement.

We would like to extend our sincere appreciation to the youth and staff at Foundry Abbotsford, and other adult allies that made this work possible!

Appendix A

Letter to the BC Special Committee on Democratic and Electoral Reform

04/23/2025

Dear members of the Special Committee on Democratic and Electoral Reform,

We are a group of high-school youth that are part of Foundry's Agenda Gap program. Our mission is to empower youth in Abbotsford and across B.C. by advocating for stronger political representation and policies that support youth mental health and well-being. We believe youth should have a direct voice in shaping the decisions that impact their communities and personal lives. Through activism and education, we work toward a future where youth leadership and advocacy drive a more just, equitable, and inclusive society.

We are writing to you today because in 2019 the NDP passed a policy convention resolution to extend the right to vote to 16 and 17 year olds. That year, the BC Green Party and Union of Municipalities unanimously supported a call to lower the provincial voting age as well. Yet, despite the current political climate and its threats to democracy, and the fact that Young New Democrats have party leadership voting rights, 16 and 17 year old youth remain disenfranchised from voting. This exclusion has far reaching impacts on youth wellbeing. This is a longstanding request and its time is overdue. It is aligned with NDP values of supporting youth engagement and addressing the needs of diverse Canadians.

Youth represent one fifth of Canada's population, with 674,500 youth under the age of 18 in British Columbia alone. Increasingly, youth are leading social movements and getting involved in their communities. Further, youth aged 16 to 17 can decide to work an unrestricted amount of hours, pay taxes, join the armed forces, become emancipated, get married, consent to sex, leave school, and drive. Young people contribute greatly to their communities and Canadian society as a whole. For example, our economic contributions as a large part of the labour force are deeply impactful upon sustaining our collective future. Further, we know that youth who vote are both passionate and knowledgeable about current affairs. In alignment with Canada's obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, young people deserve the right that voting affords to participate in political life and influence the decisions and policies that affect them.

As documented in the recent [Lowering the Voting Age: UNICEF Canada Policy Brief \(2024\)](#), a number of countries around the world, such as Austria, Belgium and Scotland, have empowered youth aged 16-18 with the right to vote. Research reveals there are no downsides to youth participation. In fact, such changes increase and broaden civic and political engagement by also increasing parent voting engagement. Extending voting rights to youth after they turn 16 also resulted in participation over a longer term, strengthening their democratic processes.

Canadians are confronting a multitude of challenges affecting our wellbeing, such as financial and social inequality, climate change, and threats to democracy. Considering these challenges alongside the decline in voter engagement, this request is timely as youth will bring a fresh perspective, new solutions, diverse opinions, and increased political representation. Extending the voting age to 16 will ultimately strengthen youth wellbeing, participation, representation, and democracy itself.

We are counting on you to:

- Extend the right to vote to those aged 16 and 17 years;
- Increase access to accurate, non-partisan political information for youth and Canadians broadly, including enhanced curriculum in schools;
- Call upon the Federal government to extend the right to vote to 16 & 17 year olds.

Thank you, in advance, for your action on this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Abbotsford Agenda Gap Youth
agenda.gap@ubc.ca



Appendix B

Pre- and Post-Survey: Overview of Scales

Basic Psychology Need Satisfaction Scale (BPNS): This scale helps us understand whether people feel their core emotional and psychological needs are being met. It looks at three key areas: feeling in control of your own choices (autonomy), feeling capable and effective in what you do (competence), and feeling connected to others (relatedness). The scale explores both the positive experiences of having these needs fulfilled and the challenges people face when these needs aren't being met.

Child & Youth Resiliency Measure (CYRM): This questionnaire helps us understand what supports young people's ability to bounce back from challenges. Aimed at youth ages 12 to 23, it looks at the strengths and resources they have—not just within themselves, but also in their relationships, communities, and cultures. Whether it's family support, a sense of belonging, or cultural identity, the CYRM helps identify what's helping youth stay strong and thrive, even in tough situations.

Diemer Critical Consciousness Scale (DCCS): This questionnaire helps us understand how aware people are of the social and political issues around them, and how motivated they are to take action. It assesses how people think about fairness and inequality in society, and whether they take action to make things more equal. This includes speaking up, getting involved in the community, and working toward positive change.

Mental Health Continuum (MHC) – Short Form: This short survey assesses overall mental well-being. It looks at how we're doing emotionally, how we feel about ourselves and our lives, and how connected we are to others. This tool helps identify whether someone is flourishing (feeling great and doing well), languishing (feeling low or stuck), or somewhere in between. It's a helpful way to check in on mental health, not just by looking for problems, but by recognizing and building on strengths.

Mental Health Promoting Knowledge: This measure explores understandings about the key factors that support positive mental health. It focuses on mental health literacy from a strengths-based perspective, highlighting knowledge that promotes well-being rather than just focusing on knowledge about mental illness.

General Self-Efficacy Scale: This scale measures how confident people feel in their ability to handle life's challenges and reach their goals. It focuses on how much someone believes in themselves when facing tough situations, and whether they feel capable of making things work. In short, it looks at how strong someone's belief is that they can overcome obstacles and succeed through their efforts.

Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) – Short Form : This scale assesses overall mental well-being. It looks at how we feel day-to-day, including our level of happiness, life satisfaction, and how well we're coping with stress. It also considers how we function emotionally and socially, including our ability to stay positive, have good relationships, and handle life's ups and downs.

Youth & Community Survey: This measure gathers information about youth's experiences and perceptions about **adult support**, **civic participation** within their communities, and **peer support** to understand youth development and well-being.



Agenda Gap

Foundry Abbotsford Pilot Community Report

May 2025

