



Yarmouth 2024-2025

Community Report



Background: About Agenda Gap



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

Introduction -Yarmouth 2024-2025 Agenda Gap:

In continuing collaboration with Nova Scotia Health Authority and SHYFT Youth Services, the school-based Youth Health Center Coordinator invited youth in the fall of 2024 to participate in Agenda Gap at Yarmouth Consolidated Memorial High School. A total of 11 youth joined the program. They participated in weekly after-school meetings from December 2024 until program completion in June 2025. Facilitation was provided by the Youth Health Center Coordinator and a SHYFT Youth Outreach Worker.

What the Yarmouth Agenda Gap Youth Accomplished:

Agenda Gap participants and their facilitators formed close relationships. As part of the program, they cooked and shared meals together each session helping to foster deep and meaningful connections. In program conversations, youth surfaced concerns about how they are treated in healthcare and school service settings. To build on these experiences, they invited a community nurse and a school staff member to discuss and gain understanding of professional perspectives as well as and relay their experiences and recommendations. The group's work culminated in the development of a video that brought together participants' perspectives, concerns, and learning across program sessions. After program conclusion, one youth was hired to contribute to the Wellbeing Tree materials and lead a youth focus group for the Youth Wellbeing Network. A local youth-serving agency also reported an increase in the number of youth accessing their services and earlier in the mental health trajectory.



Evaluation Framework

To inform continuous program improvement and better understand its impacts, all participants are invited to take part in Agenda Gap evaluation activities. ***This report summarizes key findings from the pre- and post-program surveys and workshop evaluations.*** Each of these evaluation tools and their objectives are summarized below followed by a presentation of the results.

Pre- & Post - Surveys

The pre-survey, completed by participants at the beginning of the program, and the 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

Workshop Evaluations

Youth participants are invited to complete an anonymous workshop evaluation 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.

Post-Survey Findings

Who participated?

In November 2024, in partnership with the Nova Scotia Health Authority and Yarmouth Consolidated Memorial High School, 11 youth were recruited. These youth ranged in age from 14 to 17 years and were spread across grades 9 to 12. The majority identified as women/girls (10 out of 11), while 1 identified as a man/boy. Most participants identified as white. Others were either Indigenous or were uncertain about their ancestry. Many identified as LGBTQ2+. Of those who completed the program, 11 completed the pre-survey, and 5 completed the post-survey.

Reported Policy Impacts

All participants reported that their knowledge of mental health promotion and awareness of how policy can be used as a key tool for promoting mental health increased as a result of their involvement in Agenda Gap. All participants also reported that their understanding increased about the social determinants of mental health, and how these can lead some groups in our society to have worse mental health.

All participants reported that they gained skills to identify and take action on changes needed in their community, and that they felt more prepared to make change in their community. Notably, all participants reported that they plan to keep working with others to contribute to policy change. Finally, 63% of participants indicated that they gained skills to work in group settings where people have different perspectives.

Personal Impacts

Participants reported that their involvement in Agenda Gap resulted in a variety of personal impacts. **In particular, all participants reported that as a result of their involvement their positive mental health improved**, and that they continue to use one or more of the social and emotional regulation techniques they learned. Most (80%) participants also reported that their involvement had led them to develop relationships that support their well-being. In addition, one youth reported that they changed their use of substances in ways that support their wellbeing, stating:

“I stopped taking psychedelics and cut down greatly on my use of marijuana because, through participation, I realized it had been negatively affecting me”

Youth-Facilitator Relationships

Participants indicated youth-facilitator relationships were positive, which included a sense of mutual respect, trust, co-learning, and shared power. All participants agreed that youth and staff learned a lot from working together; that they learned a lot from the staff; that there was a good balance of power between youth and staff; and that it was clear that youth and staff respected and trusted each other.



Measures of Mental Health and Well-Being

A number of established scales were used to measure the indicators of mental health among youth participants, including self-efficacy, well-being, motivation, peer and adult support, among others. A list of these scales is provided on the final page of this report. Consistent with results from other Agenda gap sites, scores improved across all scales. (Figure 1)

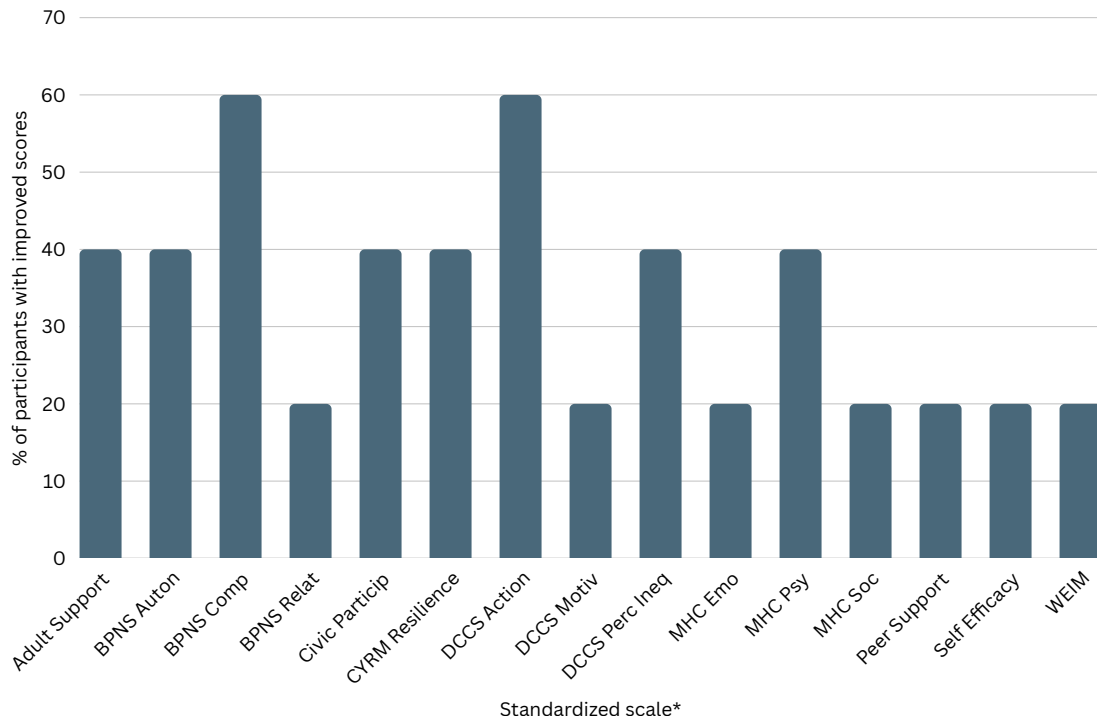


Figure 1. Yarmouth Pre to Post Gains on Standardized Scales (n=5)

*See Appendix A for a description of the measures used

Workshop Evaluations

Over the course of 18 workshops, 86 session-evaluations were collected from participants.

Across these evaluations, sessions were rated as good or excellent in 97% of responses. Participants also agreed that sessions were productive in 90% of evaluations, reported learning something new in 89%, and indicated that they contributed meaningfully in 74% of evaluations. (Figure 2.)

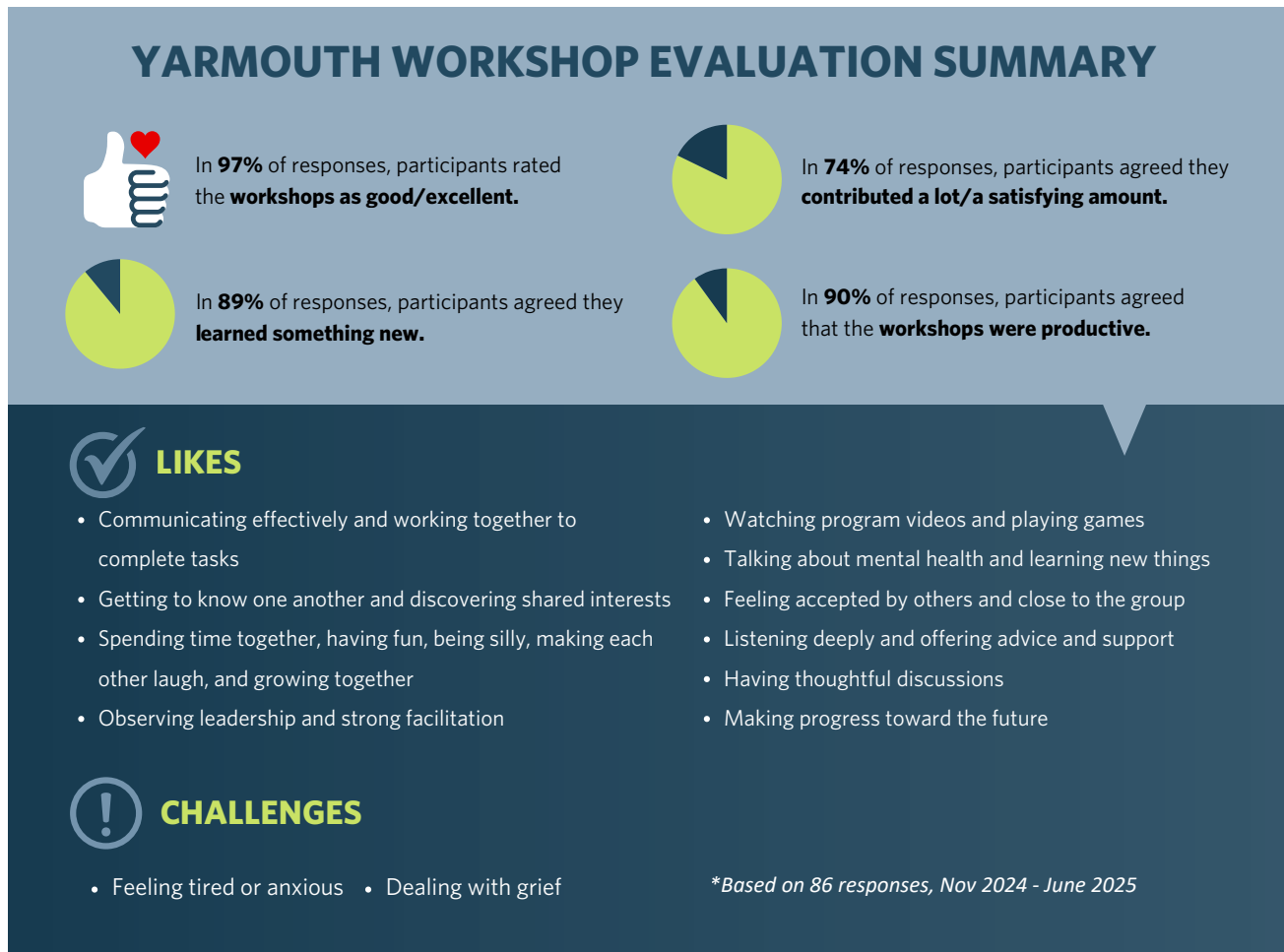


Figure 2. Yarmouth Agenda Gap Session Evaluations Summary

Open-Ended Responses

Open-ended responses collected through workshop evaluations and the post-program survey allowed youth to elaborate on aspects of their Agenda Gap experience that they found particularly impactful. Participants highlighted the importance of connection, describing how getting to know one another and discovering shared interests shaped their experience of the workshops. Youth further emphasized the value of spending time together in ways that felt enjoyable and authentic: having fun, being silly, and making one another laugh.

"The chaos of the group is amazing and definitely keeps things interesting and enjoyable."

"The entire group getting along and laughing at literally nothing."

"Engaging with each other in a positive way and making others laugh."

These shared moments of enjoyment and playfulness helped foster a sense of closeness and familiarity within the group, creating a foundation for more meaningful engagement. Participants described how this sense of connection allowed for thoughtful discussion, deep listening, and sharing of advice and support among peers. They also reflected that Agenda Gap felt like a supportive and comfortable space, where they felt accepted by others:

"I feel that everyone in our group is amazing! We all laugh and be silly together. This group really helps me!"

"I love the group so far and can't wait to be around them more and grow together as a group."

"[The high point of the workshop was] having a fun time with a close group in a comfortable environment."

"I think Agenda Gap is a really great thing filled with understanding people."

"This is a very positive and accepting group."

As strong relationships developed within the group, youth reported that they enjoyed working collaboratively and felt motivated by the opportunity to contribute to positive change:

"I love that we are able to be both silly and energetic and stay on task."

"I like how we all communicated with each other."

"I learned a lot that I didn't know."

In addition to peer relationships, participants expressed appreciation for the leadership and facilitation of the program, highlighting the meaningful relationships they formed with facilitators and the impact this had on them:

"I seen [Facilitator A] and [Facilitator B] being great leaders and they are really fun to be around."

"Had a great time with [Facilitator A] and [Facilitator B] they are amazing people and for new leaders of the program they are doing amazing, it's awesome!"

Following the conclusion of the program, youth described how their participation influenced them personally, noting increased confidence in speaking with peers and in group settings

"By the end of agenda gap I was not afraid to talk to the group."

"I feel a lot better on communicating with my peers!"

Conclusion

This report presents highlights from survey data collected as part of an evaluation of the Agenda Gap program delivered to youth in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia in 2024/2025. Feedback indicates that the program was well received by participants. Many youth reported that the experience was meaningful, increased their interest in engaging in policy change, and supported their mental health and overall wellbeing.

We would like to extend our sincere appreciation to the youth, staff at Yarmouth Consolidated Memorial High School and Nova Scotia Health, as well as the broader community that made this work possible!



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Appendix

Overview of Survey Measures

1. Basic Psychology Need Satisfaction Scale (BPNS): A scale that 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.

2. Child & Youth Resiliency Measure (CYRM): A questionnaire that 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.

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

4. Mental Health Continuum (MHC) – Short Form: A short survey that helps assess 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 the positives too.

5. 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 identifying illness.

6. General Self-Efficacy 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 own efforts.

7. Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) – Short Form : Assesses overall mental well-being. It looks at how we feel day-to-day—like our happiness, life satisfaction, and how well we're coping with stress. It also considers how we function emotionally and socially, including things like staying positive, having good relationships, and feeling able to handle life's ups and downs.

8. 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 assess impact on youth development and well-being.

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