

YOUTH CAREER CATALYST INFO PACKAGE



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**OUTWARD BOUND
CANADA**

Funded in part by the Government
of Canada under the Youth
Employment and Skills Strategy

Canada

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT THE PROGRAM.....	1
Our Unique Experiential Approach.....	2
What To Expect.....	3
APPLICATION PROCESS.....	4
Application River Guide.....	5
PROGRAM DETAILS.....	6
Part 1: Employment Coaching & Mentorship.....	6
Part 2: In-Person Training.....	7
Part 3: Supported Work Experience.....	10
PROGRAM DATES.....	11
FINANCIAL SUPPORT.....	14
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS.....	15
PARTICIPANT CONDUCT POLICY.....	20

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Funded by the Government of Canada under the Youth Employment and Skills Strategy program, Outward Bound Canada's Youth Career Catalyst (YCC) is an innovative employment skills program for youth (ages 18-30). We combine outdoor experiential learning, supported work experiences and an individualized coaching and mentoring program to support those furthest from employment in entering Canada's workforce.

Outward Bound Canada's YCC program offers eligible participants personal and interpersonal development, skill building, employment readiness, resilience and community through time in nature. This allows participants to develop the critical life-skills that are needed more than ever in today's job market. Our goal is to help each participant unlock their inner potential and achieve success by providing a meaningful and immersive community-learning environment.

Eligibility Requirements

This program is designed to support individuals facing unique challenges related to employment. If you meet all of the following criteria, you are eligible to apply:

- Between 18 and 30 years of age at the start of the program
- Canadian citizens, permanent residents, or protected persons as defined by the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act with a valid work permit
- Not currently employed & available for work
- Not currently attending or registered for a school or formal training program.
- Not currently in an apprenticeship or internship

**Note: We welcome applications from youth who may face multiple barriers in the job market, including limited work experience, financial pressures, difficulty accessing training, discrimination, or other socio-economic barriers.*



Our Unique Experiential Approach

Participants learn by doing through a mix of outdoor experiences and hands-on workshops. A large part of the program takes place outside, where time in nature helps build teamwork, confidence, and problem-solving skills. On indoor days, the learning stays active and practical. Instead of traditional classroom lectures, participants join group activities, guided conversations, and real tasks like building resumes or practicing interviews. The focus is on experiential learning that supports both personal and professional growth.

- **Life and Employability Skills:** Through hands-on and group activities in both outdoors and indoors settings, participants build collaboration, adaptability, communication, problem-solving, conflict management, resilience, and leadership skills.
- **Technical Skills:** Participants complete a Standard First Aid certification course and develop region-specific outdoor and practical skills that strengthen initiative, judgement, and decision making, and situational awareness in real-world settings.
- **Professional Skills:** Participants practice goal setting, career planning, workplace communication, resume writing, interview skills, and job search strategies through active, applied activities.



What To Expect

The YCC program features three parts:

- 1. Employment Coaching/Mentoring:** Personalized and structured guidance to help you navigate your career journey. Support begins one month before the in-person training and continues for three months afterward.
- 2. In-Person Training:** Participants spend 26 days away from home (24 days in program + 2 travel days) living and learning with a diverse group of peers. The program includes two weeks of experiential workshops, an eight-day outdoor journey, and three days of pre-journey skills training. Throughout the training, they build practical life and employability skills like collaboration, adaptability, communication, problem solving, and job readiness. A Standard First Aid & CPR certification course is also part of the program. Participants receive a training stipend for the in person portion of training.
- 3. Supported Work Experience:** Job search support, career coaching, expedited interview opportunities, references, and employer wage funding. After training, participants work with YCC staff to secure a paid work experience that aligns with their skills, education, and interests. They receive personalized one-on-one mentoring, coaching, and job search and application support to help them identify career goals and compete confidently in the job market. Participants may also access expedited interview opportunities through our network of partner employers. Employers who hire YCC participants can receive wage funding for up to 14 weeks, based on minimum wage.



APPLICATION PROCESS

A Note on Readiness:

We put careful thought into designing the YCC application and registration process. Because we receive many applications for just 25 spots per region, our goal is to ensure every participant is ready to take full advantage of the program. Being part of the YCC program involves a strong commitment to growth, new learning, and quite honestly, some hard work!

We encourage you to reflect honestly on whether YCC is a good fit for you right now:

Before you apply, ask yourself these five questions:

- Do you meet all of the basic requirements to join?
- Can you commit to being away from home for the intense 26-day training?
- Will you actively look for and fully participate in your work experience, using the YCC team's help?
- Are you excited to learn new skills, gain experience, and grow personally?
- Are you ready for hands-on learning, spending time outside, and building strong team relationships with a diverse crew?

If you answered YES to all five, please apply!



Application River Guide

1

Attend Info Session

You've already registered, now you'll just need to join the session! YCC Program staff will be there to share more details and answer any questions.



2

Consider the Program

Take your time to think about how the program fits with where you're at in your life, your interests and personal and professional goals.

3

If Yes, Apply!

Log onto our Application Portal and fill out all required documents to finalize your application for the program. If you need support with this, please reach out! We want to help.

IF SELECTED



5

Program Acceptance

You will hear back from us after the interview to let you know if you are accepted into the program. If selected, you'll be asked to confirm your acceptance and complete the final paperwork to join us!

IF SELECTED



4

Interview

If shortlisted you will receive an email from YCC staff (so make sure to monitor your messages). Schedule a time that works for you and just be ready to be yourself.

6

Pre-Program Activities

About a month before arrival, you'll begin online coaching and mentoring to help you set goals and get ready for the program.

7

Program Start!

You will travel to the program location to meet everyone and get started with the in person training.



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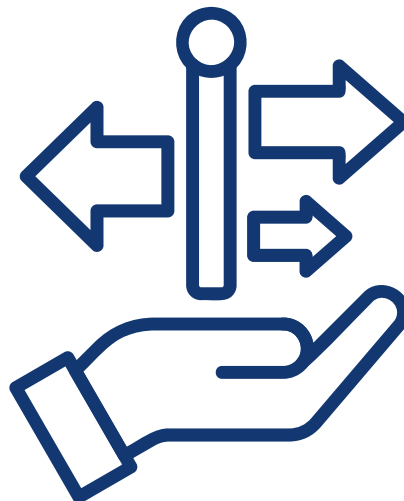
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PROGRAM DETAILS

Part 1: Employment Coaching & Mentorship

Participants' coaching and membership begins 1 month before the in-person program. A YCC Facilitator will meet with you virtually to help you prepare for the program and get to know your personal goals and support needs. Following the in-person training, the coaching and mentorship will be ongoing for 3-4 months virtually via scheduled meetings 2-4 times per month.

- 1:1 coaching & mentoring
- Resume and cover letter review & updating
- Interview coaching and practice
- Group mentorship sessions
- Ongoing learning opportunities



Part 2: In-Person Training

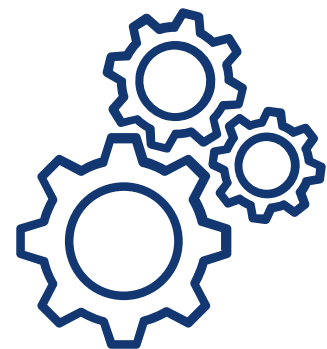
The 26-day in-person program will be spent participating in Experiential Workshops, and preparing for and being on a backcountry journey.

Experiential Workshops

This part of the program is based at an outdoor centre where the cohort of 20-25 participants share community living space and meals. Experiential workshops take place both indoors and outdoors. The skills developed during this time will support you while living with others during the program and transfer to the rest of your life back home as well, both in work and personal relationships.

Workshops will include:

- Communication Skills
- Collaboration & Team-building
- Conflict Management
- Stress Management & Mental Wellness
- Goal Setting
- Self Awareness & Reflective Practices
- Standard First Aid & CPR
- Workplace communication skills
- Life & Career Planning
- Intro to Resumes, Job Searches & Interview Skills
- Preparing for Supported Work Experiences



Outdoor Journey

At this point the cohort will split into two groups of 10 participants, who will travel together on a backcountry journey (backpacking, canoeing or sea kayaking, depending on your region).

Interpersonal, leadership and technical skills are practiced and built upon through the real-world challenges that present themselves during this experience. Individuals are able to build relationships, and uncover their unique qualities and attributes with the support of a close-knit team of peers and facilitators.

Learning is strengthened through reflective practices, facilitated discussions, and journaling activities. As participants develop their skills and comfort in the outdoor environment, responsibility for decision making, problem solving and leadership is gradually turned over to participants, allowing individuals to further hone these skills, gain a greater sense of their personal strengths and attributes and build confidence. A 24 hour solo experience is incorporated into the journey as an opportunity for self reflection. During the journey we focus on practicing and refining the following skills:

- Adaptability
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Self & Peer Leadership
- Personal and Group Organization
- Creative Problem Solving & Decision Making
- Technical Skills including navigation & outdoor living skills



Sample Program Schedule

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Arrival & Travel Day	Intro Day	Pre-Journey Training (on base)			Rest Day	Journey Start
Day 8	Day 9	Day 10	Day 11	Day 12	Day 13	Day 14
Outdoor Journey					Journey End	Journey Debrief & Wrap Up
Day 15	Day 16	Day 17	Day 18	Day 19	Day 20	Day 21
Rest Day	Experiential Workshops				Rest Day	Experiential Workshops
Day 22	Day 23	Day 24	Day 25	Day 26		
Experiential Workshops				Departure Day	Supported Work Experience phase starts! Mentoring and coaching continues.	



Part 3: Supported Work Experience

After training, participants work with YCC staff to secure a work experience that aligns with their skills, education, and interests. They receive personalized one-on-one mentoring, references, coaching, job search and application support to help them identify career goals and compete confidently in the job market. Participants may also access expedited interview opportunities through our network of partner employers. Employers who hire YCC participants can receive wage funding for up to 14 weeks.

Supported Work Experiences will either be local to your community or with employers who can provide staff accommodations, depending on the job. **Housing, relocation and transportation costs aren't covered by the YCC, though some employers may offer staff accommodations.**

While you're working, your YCC Facilitator will check in individually and offer opportunities to stay connected with your cohort.

At the end of your Supported Work Experience, your employer and your facilitator can provide you with a professional reference to support your next steps in work or school.



PROGRAM DATES - BC

Application Closing Date*	February 15, 2026 <small>*note that applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis until this date</small>
Mentorship & Coaching (Program commitment length)	March 15 - Aug 15, 2026
In-Person Training	April 19-May 14, 2026 Welcome and Pre-Journey: April 19 - 24 Outdoor Journey: April 25-May 2 Experiential Workshops May 5-14
Experiential Workshops	Camp Gilwell, Courtenay, BC & Cowichan Lake Research Station, Cowichan Lake, BC
Journey Details	Coastal Canoeing or Sea Kayaking, Vancouver Island
Supported Work Experience	Start dates & length varies by individual



PROGRAM DATES - ALBERTA

Application Closing Date*	March 30, 2026 <small>*note that applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis until this date</small>
Mentorship & Coaching (Program commitment length)	April 31 - Sept 25, 2026
In-Person Training	May 31-June 25, 2026 Experiential Workshops: June 5-11 Outdoor Journey: June 12-23 Experiential Workshops: June 24-29
Experiential Workshops	Camp Horizon - Bragg Creek, AB & Camp Jubilee - Cochrane, AB
Journey Details	Backpacking, hiking and camping in the Alberta Rockies, Exact Journey Location TBD
Supported Work Experience	Start dates & length varies by individual



PROGRAM DATES - ONTARIO

Application Closing Date*	April 26, 2026 <small>*note that applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis until this date</small>
Mentorship & Coaching (Program commitment length)	May 27-Oct 22, 2026
In-Person Training	June 27-July 22, 2026 Experiential Workshops: June 27-July 5 Outdoor Journey: July 6-15 Experiential Workshops :July 16-22
Experiential Workshops	Kinark Outdoor Centre, Minden, Ontario
Journey Details	Flatwater Canoeing, location TBD
Supported Work Experience	Start dates & length varies by individual



FINANCIAL SUPPORT

We recognize the importance of reducing financial barriers to participation in the YCC program.

Program Costs and Stipends

- No Direct Cost: The YCC program is federally funded, meaning the program is free for accepted participants to attend.
- Training stipend: Participants earn a modest training stipend throughout the 26-day in-person program.

Supported Work Experience Earnings

- During the supported work experience phase, participants are paid directly by their employer. Earnings are based on minimum wage for the hours worked.

Additional Financial Support Options

We offer limited financial assistance to address specific barriers:

- Travel Costs: Limited financial support can be requested by individuals experiencing financial barriers to cover some necessary travel costs associated with getting to our program locations (e.g., bus or train fare).
- Emergency Living Support: A limited amount of emergency support funding is available for participants facing challenges covering basic living costs (groceries, rent, etc.) while back at home and unemployed.

Note:

- Travel between regions (for example, if you live in Ontario and want to attend the program in BC) is **not covered**.
- We strongly discourage individuals from applying to a YCC location outside of their home province. Out of province applications will not be prioritized.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

HOW STRICT ARE THE AGE REQUIREMENTS? WHAT IF I'M TURNING 31 SOON?

The Youth Career Catalyst program is only open to participants aged 18-30 at the time the program begins. You must be aged between 18-30 when you start the program. If you begin the program at age 30 and turn 31 during the program, you may complete the phase of the program that you are in, but you will not be able to start a new phase of the program once you are 31. For example, if you turn 31 during the in-person training, you will be able to complete the in-person training, however you would not be able to start the supported work experience portion of the program afterwards.

ARE WE REQUIRED TO BRING OUR OWN EQUIPMENT?

Outward Bound Canada supplies all of the technical equipment that participants will need, including tents, canoes/kayaks/backpacking gear, first-aid equipment, cooking equipment, etc. We will provide a packing list for personal items ahead of the program to ensure that each participant feels prepared. Don't worry if you do not have some of the items on the packing list, as we have a healthy supply of clothing items to lend out!

WHAT WEATHER CONDITIONS CAN BE EXPECTED DURING THE OUTDOOR JOURNEY?

The Youth Career Catalyst program runs rain or shine! Outdoor activities will take place in a wide range of weather conditions. Our experienced team will monitor weather conditions regularly and adjust activities as needed to ensure they remain safe and appropriate. Participants will be provided with guidance on how to prepare for different weather conditions, including what clothing and gear to bring.



WHAT KIND OF ROLES OR WORKSHOPS COULD BE PART OF THE SUPPORTED WORK EXPERIENCE?

Supported work experience opportunities depend on each participant's interest, skills, and qualifications. Participants are expected to take an active role in the job search and application process, with guidance and support from our team.

While employer partners may vary for each cohort and we can't guarantee opportunities with specific employers, here are some examples of the types of organizations and industries where Youth Career Catalyst alumni have completed their supported work experience:

- Nature/Environmental education centres
- Outdoor camps
- Community health centres
- Early childhood education centres
- Retail environments
- Hospitality and tourism
- Outdoor guiding and recreation companies

CAN I APPLY TO A REGION OUTSIDE OF MY HOME PROVINCE? WHAT IF I AM ABLE TO COVER MY OWN TRAVEL COSTS AND/OR WILLING TO RELOCATE THERE FOR WORK AFTER THE PROGRAM?

To ensure participants receive the highest quality of support as possible while they are in the program, we will prioritize applicants who are local to the province in which the program is running. We strongly discourage individuals from applying to a program location outside of their home province. If there is no program in your home province, you may apply to the location closest to your home province, however please note that in-province applicants will be prioritized. If you apply for a program location outside of your home province, we would strongly encourage you to consider support systems in that province, which could include a place to stay and/or a community network.



WHAT IF A JOB I'M INTERESTED IN IS FUNDED BY OTHER GOVERNMENT FUNDING (FOR EXAMPLE, CANADA SUMMER JOBS)? COULD I STILL APPLY FOR THAT JOB AS A SUPPORTED WORK EXPERIENCE OPPORTUNITY?

We encourage participants to apply for any jobs they're interested in and qualified for, even if the employer receives other types of government funding. Our team will work with participants to review opportunities on a case-by-case basis and work with employers to determine whether a role is eligible for wage funding through our program. Even if a position isn't eligible for wage funding through our program, it may still be a great employment opportunity and valuable experience, and our team will be here to support you in exploring your options.

HOW COMPETITIVE IS THE APPLICATION PROCESS, AND HOW ARE APPLICATIONS EVALUATED? DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR APPLYING?

The Youth Career Catalyst program receives many applications each year, and unfortunately, we cannot accept everyone who applies. Applications are reviewed carefully and individually to ensure the program is a good match for participants' interests, skills, and goals as well as their readiness to embark on an intensive period away from home and supports.

Applications are evaluated based on factors such as:

- Meeting the basic eligibility criteria.
- Motivation, interest, and program readiness.
- Desire to find a job and take the steps needed to get there.

Tips for applying:

- Take your time to answer questions thoughtfully and honestly.
- Highlight your interests, goals, and any experiences that show your enthusiasm and initiative.
- Contact us if you need support filling out the application – our team is here to help.

Even though we cannot accept everyone, the process of applying to a program is a valuable step in exploring your interests and career goals. We wish all applicants the best in their career and personal journey!



WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE YOUTH CAREER CATALYST AND THE FOUNDATIONS/ESSENTIALS PROGRAMS THAT ARE LISTED ON YOUR WEBSITE?

The Youth Career Catalyst (YCC) program is an employment-focused program funded in part by the Government of Canada under the Youth Employment and Skills Strategy. YCC combines outdoor experiential learning, paid supported work experience, and individualized coaching and mentoring to help young people facing barriers to employment enter Canada's workforce. While some YCC participants may be interested in working outdoors, the program is not limited to this industry, and we have supported participants pursuing a diverse range of career paths.

The Foundations and Essentials programs are outdoor industry training programs for participants specifically interested in building a career in the outdoor sector. Unfortunately at this time, we do not have confirmed sessions for the Foundations or Essentials programs in 2026. In the future, Outward Bound Canada may be able to continue offering these valuable courses when it is feasible for our team to do so.

HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL BE IN THE PROGRAM?

The Experiential Workshops component of the program is open for up to 25 participants. During the journey, you will be with up to 9 of your peers and 2 instructors.

WHAT WILL I BE EATING?

Experiential Workshops - We will receive catering from the outdoor centre which is typically summer camp food. Dietary restrictions are shared with the catering company.

Out on trip - A detailed menu is planned before each program, which may change based on a number of factors. We can accommodate many dietary restrictions and most food allergies. Please provide as much detail as possible about your dietary restrictions and allergies on your confidential medical history form. We may ask you for further information so that we can plan the menu.

Participants will receive sufficient calories for the physical activities on the course. It is not necessary for you to bring your own food to the course. Please speak to our staff team to make sure you understand the dietary concerns of the other participants before packing any extra snacks.



WHAT WILL THE SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS BE?

During the Experiential Workshops, participants will share cabins or rooms with bunk beds and a bathroom. A separate, gendered washhouse is also available with extra toilet facilities and showers.

During the journey, participants will sleep in solo tents provided by OBC as well as a sleeping bag and sleeping pad. You can bring your own sleeping bag if you wish, but if it's not appropriate for the weather conditions, your instructors may suggest that you use one of ours. Please contact us if you have any further questions about sleeping arrangements.

ARE THERE BATHROOMS OR SHOWERS ON THE JOURNEY?

There are no bathroom facilities or showers on this part of the program. Outward Bound expeditions are a true backcountry experience! You will learn how to appropriately do their business while out in the field. Hygiene is important when living and working with others, so things like hand washing before meals, sanitizing dishes, and brushing teeth are always part of the daily routine. You can choose to bring (biodegradable) soap or baby wipes to freshen up without showers.



WHAT IS THE “SOLO EXPERIENCE”?

During the Journey, you will have the opportunity to take part in an overnight (24 hour) solo experience. A solo experience is a key component of an Outward Bound course, and can help foster self-awareness, build self-confidence and resilience, and give you an opportunity to pause and take time for personal reflection in the midst of an intense group experience. For many, the solo is one of the most impactful components of their Outward Bound course.. Having the time to sit with yourself in nature can be a great gift in a world which moves at a fast pace. Solo generally happens just past the midway point of the Journey.

Safety during solo is one of our primary concerns, and so we have a careful set of risk management practices in place. Note that solo is not a survival experience or a time to explore the woods by yourself!

- You will be restricted to a small area within an audible distance from a main campsite where your instructors will be located.
- You will be provided with a shelter (which you will set up yourself), food, emergency signaling device (whistle) and water.
- Instructors will conduct regular visual checks on you during your solo.
- As with all course activities, solo is a ‘challenge by choice’ activity in that you can choose the level of challenge of your solo. Some possible options will be presented to you by instructors during a safety briefing as you get close to solo (ie: distance from main camp, more check-ins by instructors).



WHAT IS YOUR RISK MANAGEMENT PROTOCOL?

OBC's highly trained, professional instructors ensure that all activities adhere to the strict guidelines we have developed over more than 50 years of working in the wilderness and that relevant provincial regulations are followed. We mitigate risk wherever possible. To ensure that everyone can participate and assess risks and opportunities, we conduct a safety briefing before each activity.

Our methods and practices are regularly monitored and reviewed by a committee made up of senior Outward Bound staff from schools across North America, as well as independent experts.

In summary, while there is always some level of risk, you are in great hands with OBC. Check out our [**Risk Management**](#) page on our website for more information.

For more information, visit:
outwardbound.ca/faq-pages/



PARTICIPANT CONDUCT POLICY

Outward Bound Canada offers participants a powerful and challenging experience where success is directly linked to their motivation and commitment to the course.

We expect all students to participate voluntarily, be willing to do their best, try new activities, work as part of a group and follow instructions. Participants who put themselves or others at risk through misconduct or unsafe practices may be asked to leave the course.

In addition, participants should note that the possession and/or use of non-prescription drugs, alcohol, tobacco and cannabis products or illegal substances during the course is prohibited and may result in early departure from the course without refund. Participants may also be asked to leave the course if they misuse prescribed medication. Exclusive and intimate relationships between participants (regardless of age) aren't permitted due to the emotional and social impact on individuals and the group and our commitment to creating a safe learning community.

It's a policy of Outward Bound Canada that harassment of any kind won't be tolerated. Harassment is defined as any behavior that threatens, humiliates, intimidates or hurts another person. This includes harassment based on gender, age, race, ethnicity or sexual orientation. These policies will be explained to you when you arrive at the beginning of your course.





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ABOUT OUTWARD BOUND CANADA

Outward Bound Canada is a registered national charity that empowers youth through experiential adventures in nature. Since 1969, more than 175,000 participants have experienced our unique programs from coast to coast. Many of the youth who complete our programs as individuals or through their school are underserved with outdoor education and need our scholarships and bursaries. Using the outdoors as our dynamic classroom, we help thousands of young people annually to develop resilience, and build their physical, social, and emotional skills, and environmental leadership.

Visit www.outwardbound.ca to support our vision: ensuring all youth in Canada have access to high quality, impactful outdoor education experiences that help them realize their potential.



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