



ELEVATE TALENT | Getting A Real Job

Supporting youth in technology, media & creative industries

**Written Submission to the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the
Upcoming Federal Budget**

By: Elevate Toronto, Inc.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Recommendation 1:** That the government support the development of programs to fill over 200,000 open jobs in the technology and innovation sector.
- **Recommendation 2:** That the government provide Elevate with funding to create a national program (**Elevate Talent | Getting A Real Job**) that engages the BIPOC and marginalized communities for the purpose of connecting them with the technology and innovation sector through a national micro-credentialing, training and job matching program. The total funding request will be determined by the scope and breadth of the final design to take this program national"

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‘connecting the dots’

SETTING THE STAGE

Founded in 2017, Elevate has become the connective tissue for Ontario’s tech and innovation ecosystem. Our experience uniting 30,000 people at Canada’s largest tech festival has given us a significant network of [partners](#), founders, policymakers, corporations, academic institutions, investors and youth.

In 2019, with support from FedDev Ontario, a project called Elevate Open House was piloted in partnership with local regional innovation centers and community partners. Elevate Open House connected job seekers with innovative companies looking to hire qualified candidates to help them scale and compete. In just 3 months over 306 start-ups from Toronto, Ottawa, Kitchener, and Waterloo participated and opened their doors to almost 10,000 job seekers. Through combined networks Elevate has fostered connections and conversations to help shape policy, build globally relevant companies, and strengthen our country’s competitiveness on a global stage with local talent.

Elevate’s mission was further strengthened in 2019 when it joined forces with the Design Exchange, a charitable organization that operates within the intersection of design, innovation and technology, to deliver social impact programs as the Elevate Social Innovation Exchange (Elevate SIX). Further, in partnership with the United Nations we launched the Canadian Headquarters of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs). Elevate has set about conceiving of new projects that would disrupt and change the status quo to align with the SDGs and further its mission in uniting the world’s innovators to solve society’s greatest challenges. With this mission in mind, we turn our focus first to a pressing challenge facing our own tech and innovation sectors in Canada- the inequities in our workforce and the limitations on access to opportunities for members of BIPOC communities.

PURPOSE

Recent events, including COVID-19 and the death of George Floyd, have forced government and business sectors to rethink their commitment to the authentic and deliberate support of Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC), marginalized communities, racialized youth, and their socio-economic success.

Over the past weeks, corporations have stepped up to address these inequities and clearly identified the need to diversify their teams, support youth through hiring initiatives and dedicate resources – human and capital - to better reflect the ethnic make-up in Canada from their Boards to staffing composition.

While there are many civil society organizations (CSOs) that provide technical skill set training to marginalized communities and racialized youth, there is a need to ‘connect the dots.’ That is, to engage with corporations and understand what the opportunities are, the hard and soft skills needed to make the connections, and the mechanisms necessary to ensure long-term community success.

Doing this right will also address the high number of open jobs in the technology and innovation sector and clearly address the talent gap by creating a funnel of qualified candidates. This sector has over 200,000 open positions across Canada and has acknowledged that there is a severe shortage of skilled individuals to fill these roles. Economically there is an acute need to skill, upskill, and reskill and this program is designed to address tech needs to support their growth and staffing needs.

BACKGROUND

The combination of COVID-19 and the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement have highlighted the inequities of youth from marginalized communities and the BIPOC community in general. The youth (20 to 24) unemployment rate in May 2020 was 42.1% compared to May 2019 at 10.8% (Globe and Mail on Instagram on 26th June 2020).

While there is an illusion COVID-19 has caused a reduction of tech-driven opportunities across Canada, the reality is that there is a need for qualified tech talent. According to a study from the Lazaridis Institute, the primary

inhibitor for companies to scale-up is the shortage of skilled workers. Many Canadian firms have indicated that, with the right talent, they would be able to double their current size including TopHat, Slack, Shopify, Wattpad.

There is currently an opportunity to affect real change to the inequality many youths from BIPOC face in their search for economic and professional success. We know that youth want to be contributors to society and their communities. They want real jobs that offer them the opportunity to grow and to be in companies where they are respected but also real contributors.

Working with CSOs, corporate partners, and government, the Elevate Talent program will support the growth of BIPOC in tech-based organizations and in the creative sector. Removing barriers and creating opportunities through engagement with youth, hiring organizations, and CSOs that provide training will ensure that programs designed are impactful and meet the needs of all stakeholders.

Those from marginalized communities, racialized youth, and BIPOC communities know that meaningful and rewarding full-time careers within the technology, media and creative sector are a means to a better life, providing income equity and thus having the ability to affect real, lasting socio-economic change.

With corporations addressing social injustice and inequalities, Elevate SIX will be the connector, providing support, logistics, and programming for successful long-term placements with a diverse and inclusive staff. Elevate has strong partnerships in the tech and innovation ecosystem across all business sectors from banks to life sciences to tech driven companies. A key role will be the conversion of these relationships to partnerships with this program.

The Elevate Talent program will ensure that those from the BIPOC and marginalized communities have the opportunity to engage, contribute and grow with the tech sector. Meaningful jobs with growing companies who are committed to change in their hiring practices will ensure that participants have the tools to succeed in a real career that will affect real change in their lives, their families, and their communities.

Summary of Elevate Talent Program Architecture

| Step | Element | Details |
|---------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Step 1 | Sign-Up Partners | Establish formal links with partners that identify opportunities for training needs and open roles that would be filled by participants |
| Step 2 | Program design | Build and pilot programs and connection points amongst partners within a test, fail and success model to ensure that start-up is not lagged by a need for perfection |
| Step 3 | Participant sign-up | Work with partners to have workshops with open discussions between partners and participants to ensure there is a clear understanding of expectations as participants enter the program |
| Step 4 | Training | Training for hard asset skill by partners and soft skill and connections by Elevate |
| Step 5 | Onboarding | Participants on-boarded to hiring partners with necessary skills and an agreed to mentorship program as part of the participant success program |
| Step 6 | Monitoring and Evaluation | <p>Constant reviews and monitoring and evaluation to gauge participant, partner and mentorship success and fails to inform program changes in real-time</p> <p>Data Collection and analysis will provide a real-time storybook of changes being made and what the effect of this program is on participants and CSOs.</p> |

PARTNERSHIPS

Government Partners

Partnership with all orders of government will be imperative to program success.

- City of Toronto plus other municipalities to be engaged as the program moves from piloting;
- Province of Ontario would provide a regional platform through community partners as well as specific departments such as Indigenous Affairs to amplify the program;
- The Government of Canada as key funder and supporter will be engaged regularly as an important partner to ensure the program works on scaling opportunities as the program advances with all partners;
- Indigenous government support and engagement will be crucial in order to ensure the participation of Indigenous youth in this program.

Civil Society Organizations – Training Partners

These are the organizations that are currently providing technology training within these communities and want to deepen their relationships. While the current focus of many of these CSOs is coding, analytics and UX/UI, engagement with hiring partners will also inform what new training programs are needed.

- Connections created to hiring partners;
- Support to expand programming and onboarding with community partners;
- Higher level of success with hiring partners engaged in program design and identifying training required for open roles;
- Ability to increase training programs of hard asset skills as identified by hiring partners.

Civil Society Organizations – Community Partners and Ambassadors

Partners in this sector have a focus on supporting these communities with a range of programs from entrepreneurship, wellness, mental health, employment access, and staying off the street initiatives.

- Engaging and building a community of participants through sharing the purpose of this initiative and ensuring youth are aware of the opportunities being created by hiring partners;
- Ensure that community leaders of this program are coordinated with the partnership and program leaders from this initiative;
- Ability to engage in roundtable discussions with hiring partners on issues related to Diversity & Inclusion and what is needed to improve relationships between BIPOC and hiring partners to create long-term solutions for corporate growth of participants;
- Ensure ground level engagement with the Indigenous community partners to ensure youth participation.

Corporate - Hiring Partners

Partners would be cross-sector- those that are technology reliant from a pure 'tech' perspective but also include the creative industries such as graphic designers, illustrators, animation and 3D prototyping.

- Focus on delivering on their commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion goals;
- Working across partners to ensure their success driven initiatives are established from the ground up with hiring and community partners;
- BIPOC and marginalized youth provide a different voice to how hiring partners engage with the communities they come from;
- Addressing gaps to manage talent requirements and open jobs.

The Canadian Council of Business Leaders Against Anti-Black Systemic Racism will be a significant partner for this program. They have created the BlackNorth Initiative to combat anti-Black systemic racism in Corporate Canada. To date they have commitments from over 400 national corporations acknowledging the existence of anti-Black systemic racism, its impact on Canada's Black citizens, and the need to create opportunities within our companies for Black people. We expect all partners of the Elevate Talent program to commit that their organizations will be reflective of the Black Community in Canada and to put their signature to the BlackNorth Initiative.

The Coalition of Innovation Leaders Against Racism (CILAR), comprised of the leading tech, innovation and corporate leaders in Canada and Chaired by Elevate Board member Claudette McGowan, was convened with incubation support from MaRS and has given their support to this program. Bell Media have also given their support and the focus will be on creative technologies especially considering the size and growth of the music, film and entertainment sector in Toronto. Bell has launched the HireBIPOC and will have its own website to increase participation from the BIPOC community.

Partnering corporations committed to hiring from the Black community and expected partners include:

1. PricewaterhouseCoopers
2. Oliver and Bonacini
3. Viacom CBS
4. Salesforce
5. Google
6. Facebook
7. Shopify
8. Amazon
9. Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment
10. Hilton Hotels
11. CISCO
12. Royal Bank of Canada
13. Deloitte Canada
14. KPMG
15. CIBC/Simpli Financial

Conclusion

The Elevate Talent program will serve Canadians on several fronts including: addressing the talent shortage in the tech sector; assisting Canada's corporate sector in diversifying their work-force to be more representative of our communities; and present BIPOC and racialized youth with the opportunity to good jobs with corporations that offer both career and fiscal growth opportunities.

To support and further expand upon this proposal, Elevate requests an invitation to appear before the House Standing Committee on Finance Pre-Budget Consultations.