APATHY IS BORING.™
Connect, Educate and Activate.

5 years · 415 alumni · 7 cities

The Alumni Study

Celebrating Half a Decade of Engagement & Impact

Table of content

I. Executive Summary 4

II. Introduction 6

III. Methodology 7

IV. Data Overview 8

- Demographics 8
- Analysis 12

V. Recommendations 24

VI. Conclusion XX

Apathy is Boring

(A is B) is a pan-Canadian, non-partisan, youth-led charitable organization whose mission is to support and educate youth to be active and contributing citizens in Canada's democracy.

I. Executive Summary

Since 2004 Apathy is Boring has lived, and embodied, youth-led values and principles. Grounded in this intention, the organization is aware of the dynamic, inventive, and creative power of Canada's young population. Because of their unyielding potential for innovation- when youth are meaningfully engaged, society is more likely to find the disruptive solutions needed to tackle the greatest social, environmental, and economic challenges we face today.

It's no secret that in 2022, Canadians are confronting a multitude of transitions and trials, particularly within our increasingly acrimonious political climate. These conditions are impacting youth in unique and difficult ways. Yet, again and again, we see young people critically & creatively participating in civic life and using their voices to tackle unprecedented challenges & respond to urgent needs.

Apathy is Boring, facilitated by RISE, supports young people in dealing with systemic problems by equipping them with the diverse skills, knowledge, and opportunities required to effectively create change. Offering youth these accessible & compelling engagement opportunities has the potential to create a stronger, and more resilient Canadian society, by laying the foundation for a lifetime of civic engagement.

To honor the diversity & ambition of Canadian youth, Apathy is Boring developed a framework that explains the unique ecosystem of youth political engagement and how it's shifted, while also outlining an approach to youth engagement that creates space for young people to lead through a combination of empowering roles; **Youth-led Democratic Innovation** (YLDI)[1].

RISE is a perfect case study of YLDI principles in action. The overarching goals of the program are two-fold; to create a network of young changemakers that will continue to grow dynamically, and to help youth see themselves as important participants in democracy, by giving them the tools, experience, and space to put their ideas into action.

The following study materialized from the need to answer the following questions:

1. **Does RISE effectively & significantly impact the lives of young people, after the program has ended?**

2. **Is Apathy is Boring successfully creating, and facilitating, decentralized networks of engaged youth?**

[1] Mahoney, Tara, et al. 2020, *Together We Rise: Youth Led Democratic Innovation in Canada.*

The results, which are explored in depth throughout the succeeding analysis, provide empirical evidence that Apathy is Boring has succeeded in hitting these vital targets. Through surveys and focus groups, we found that RISE alumni are still meaningfully engaging with peers they connected with in the program, without any direct intervention or support from Apathy is Boring. They continue to exhibit engagement behaviors that far exceed the patterns of average Canadian youth, and are demonstrating voting habits that surpass even the typical adult population.

From a professional lens, the report discovered that RISE had a significant impact on the career paths and educational pursuits of our alumni community. The skills, networks, and mentorship opportunities the program offered led alumni to feel better prepared for the workforce, and with greater options for potential volunteer and job pursuits.

When discussing personal power and confidence, two bedrock KPIs of the RISE program, alumni shared their RISE experience encouraged and supported them to step outside their comfort zone, in a space that exuded inclusivity and support. These elements were listed as factors that significantly impacted their confidence.

While the program has demonstrated significant success, our evaluations process has also revealed sore points, and areas for growth and development. For instance, the organizational lack of consistent post-program engagement opportunities discourages long-term engagement, both civically and with the Apathy is Boring. Additionally, one of the lowest performing program metrics is ambassador's belief they have access to mentorship opportunities. Building up the internal capacity to develop long-term relationships with our alumni community, while offering them greater access to resources and support networks, is a strategic priority for Apathy is Boring.

As the organization looks ahead to the next 5 years of growth and youth engagement, the results of this study paint an exciting picture of the long term impact of RISE, and its emerging potential to have significant & measurable impact on the lives of young Canadians. This report could not have been possible without the collaboration of our incredible C1-C4 alumni community, who graciously gave us their time and energy to recount their RISE experience, and how it affected their personal and professional trajectories.

II.
Introduction

The RISE program is quickly approaching its 5th birthday, and is looking towards more years of growth, engagement, impact, and connection. The Research and Development team is dedicated to supporting the program's continuous evolution, to ensure RISE reflects the changing needs of our youth community. Thus, it's time to pause and check-in with alumni who engaged with us from 2018-2019, a time when the program was still in its infancy, and developing its tone & structure.

In order to truly understand and measure our impact as a youth-serving organization, it's imperative we take the pulse of our alumni. Through our evaluations process, we know that youth exiting the RISE program report impressive growth in personal power, confidence, agency, engagement, and peer network development.

79% of C1-C9 ambassadors leave the program, feeling they have made connections with people in their communities working on issues they care about.

79% leave the program feeling they have the skills, knowledge, and resources needed to initiate their own community project.

89% have gained communications skills as a result of RISE.

77% have gained leadership skills.

But to truly understand the program's impact on a macro scale, and observe how it adds to the youth leadership/changemaker ecosystem, this report aims to measure whether or not alumni's involvement in RISE has continued to impact their personal & professional lives, engagement patterns, and overall sense of self years after their involvement in the program.

AisB has made a commitment to our iterative methodology of 'Gather Knowledge', 'Experiment and Innovate' and 'Evaluate and Maximize Impact'. When it comes to gathering knowledge, much of this data is collected through participant feedback. This report would not have been possible without the hundreds of ambassadors who have graciously provided rich insights from 2018, to now.

The data analyzed in this report will be used to inform future curriculum development & modifications, while encouraging the organization to develop more consistent and robust alumni engagement strategies. As the program develops and Apathy is Boring's reach expands, more and more youth will join our growing community of alumni & volunteers. This report will support our ongoing efforts to keep this community engaged and inspired.

III. Methodology

This report uses both quantitative and qualitative research, in order to paint a more accurate portrait of alumni's growth, and existing qualities. The two methods used were a qualitative and quantitative survey, complimented by 4 focus group sessions.

FOCUS GROUPS

I. **4 focus groups** were held the week of May 16th, 2022

II. **90 minute** interviews

III. Focus group questions

IV. Total of **13 participants**

V. Cohort breakdown:
   A. C1= **4**
   B. C2= **4**
   C. C3= **2**
   D. C4 = **3**

VI. City breakdown:
   A. Toronto: **2**
   B. Edmonton: **3**
   C. Vancouver: **3**
   D. Montreal: **3**
   E. Ottawa: **2**

SURVEY

I. Completed by **36 alumni**

II. Represents **51% of alumni** from C1-C4

III. City breakdown:
   A. Edmonton: **9**
   B. Montreal: **9**
   C. Ottawa: **8**
   D. Toronto: **7**
   E. Vancouver: **3**

SURVEY DESIGN

The survey questions were designed to align with the following themes that our evaluations plan uses to measure the program's success. The themes were slightly adapted for relevancy, and to measure changes across longer timeline:

Engagement
Measuring the quality & frequency of engaged behavior

Civic Engagement
Evaluating rates of engagement in "traditional" political actions (voting, etc).

Network
Measuring the quality of relationships alumni have built through their participation in RISE, and how frequently they engage with them.

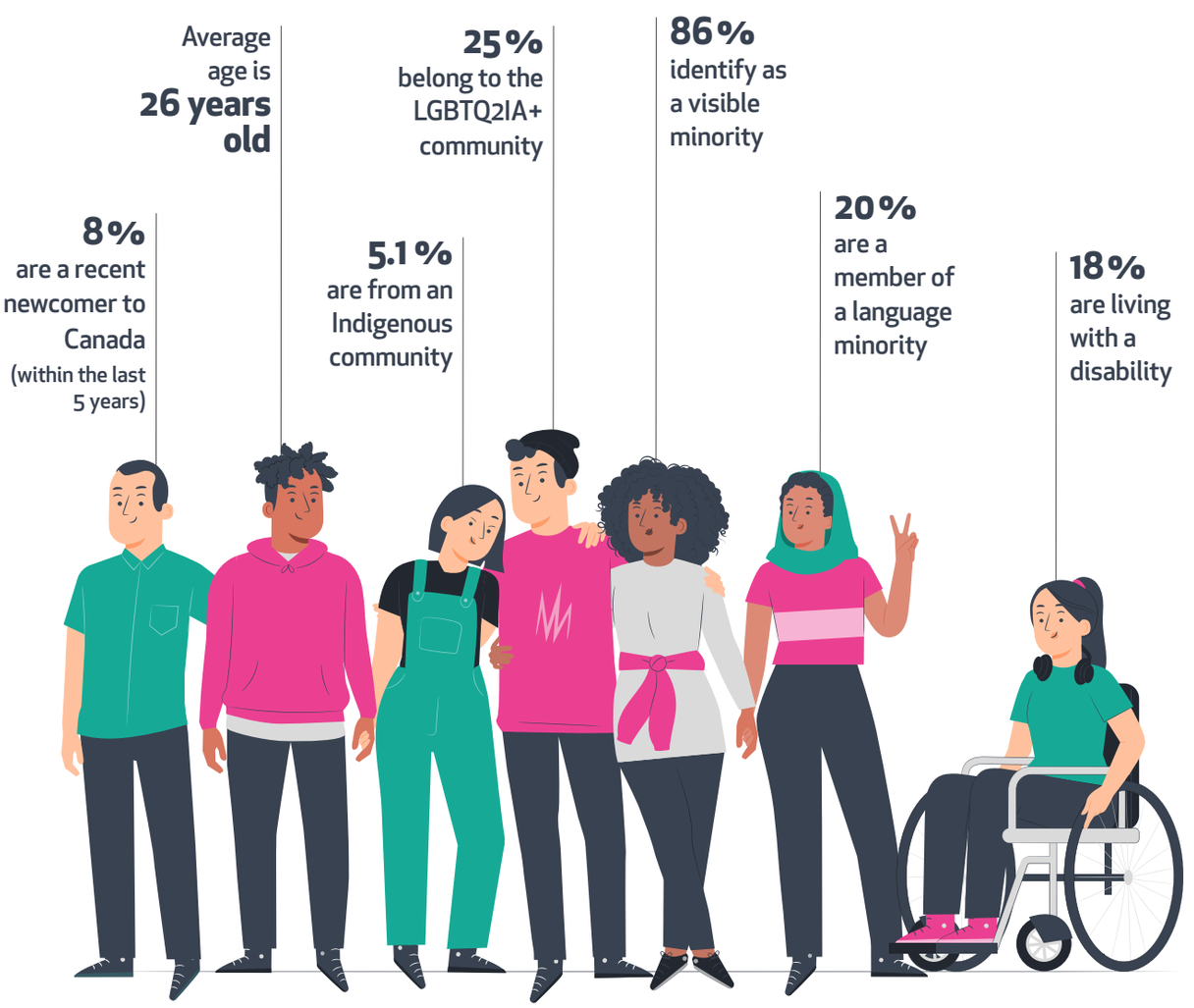
Professional Development
Identifying whether RISE impacted alumni's professional goals & trajectories.

Personal Power
Evaluating if RISE had successful and long-term effects on alumni's sense of confidence & personal power.

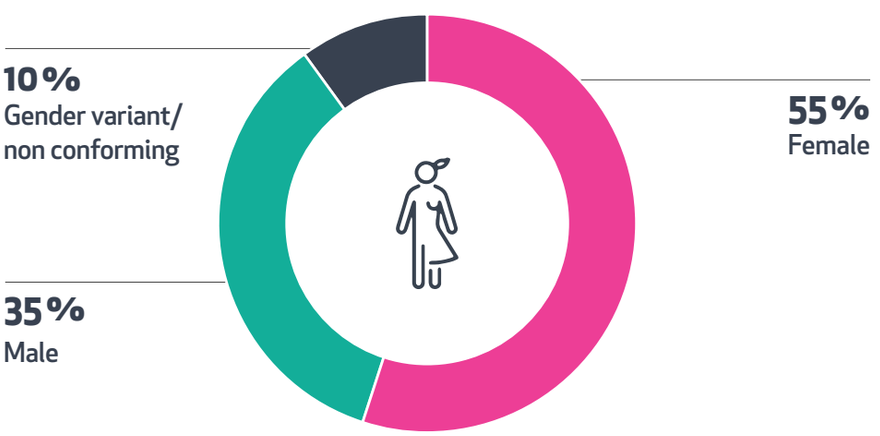
Skills & knowledge development
Evaluating if alumni continue to use and/or build upon the skills & knowledge they developed as ambassadors.

IV.
Data Overview

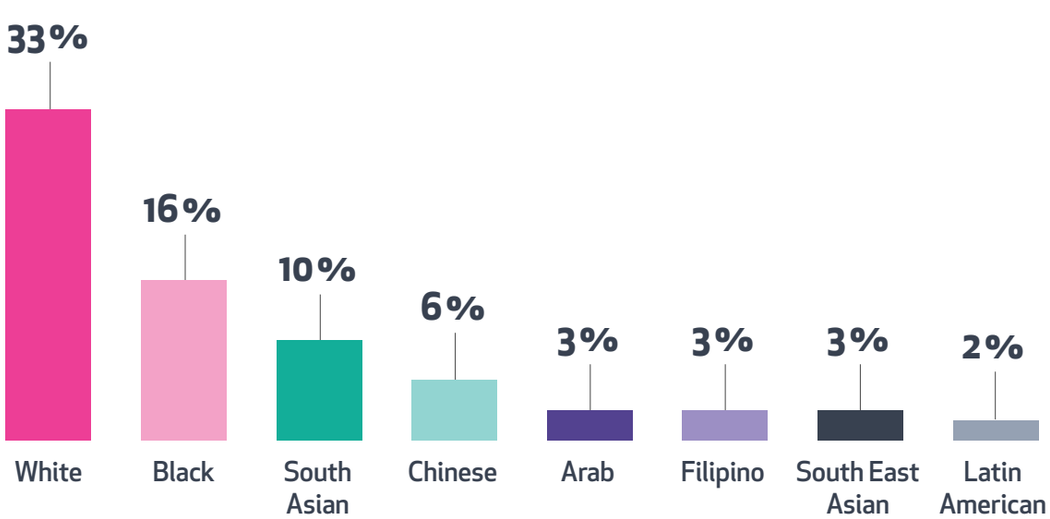
Demographics: Who are our alumni?



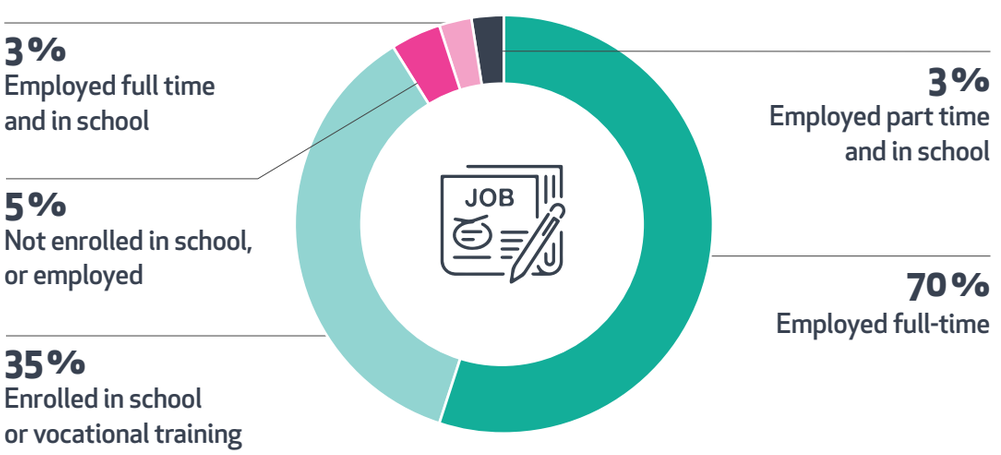
Gender



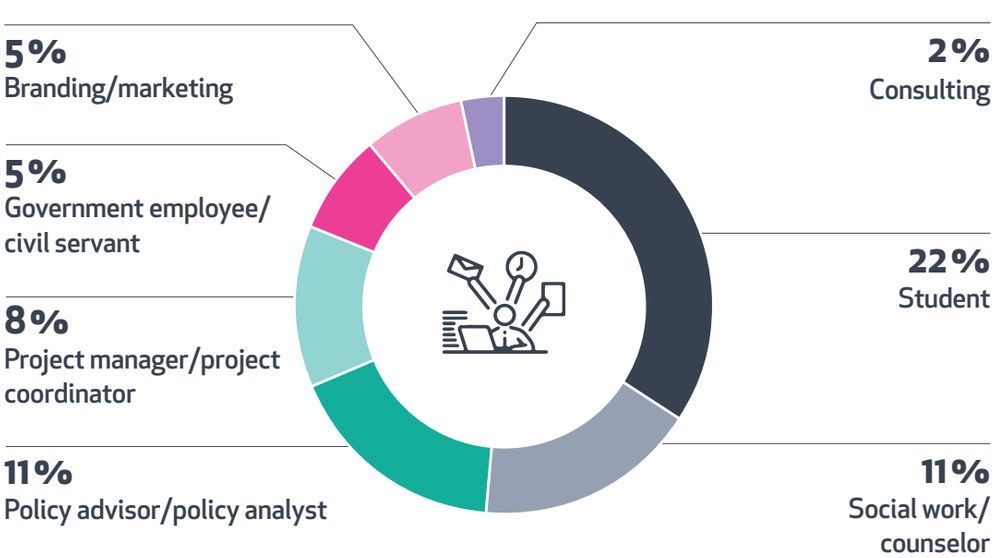
Ethnicity



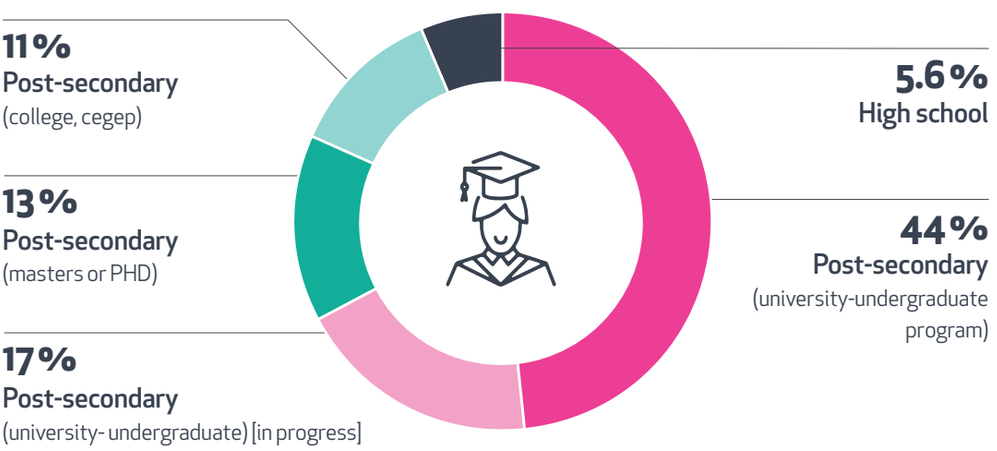
Employment status



Occupation



Education level



Data Analysis

1. Engagement (Civic & political)

A. On a scale of 1-10, alumni rated their level of daily engagement in their communities a **6/10**.

B. Since completing RISE, **56% of alumni** have offered time, skills, and or resources to support a political campaign or party.

C. On a scale of 1-10, alumni rated their likelihood to vote in the next municipal election a **8.8/10**.

D. On a scale of 1-10, alumni rated their likelihood to vote in the next provincial election a **9.2/10**.

E. On a scale of 1-10, alumni rated their likelihood to vote in the next federal election a **9/10**.

2. Engagement (Post-program)

A. **88% of alumni** have engaged with Apathy is Boring since completing RISE.

1. **56%** have attended an event (*Table topics, RISE project, community consultation*).
2. **32%** have worked or volunteered (*Became a mentor, volunteered for VOTE, joined a focus group*).

B. On a scale of 1-10, alumni rated Apathy is Boring's effectiveness at providing engagement opportunities a **7/10**.

C. **77%** continue to engage with us on social media

D. **70%** are subscribed to our monthly newsletter

E. **61%** read the FEED

3. Potential/future engagement (Post-program)

A. **77%** of alumni, given the opportunity, are likely to co-create initiatives with fellow participants.

B. **88%** are likely, given the opportunity, to participate in skills-building/professional development workshops.

C. **80%** are likely, given the opportunity, to join monthly meetings open to RISE alumni to share opportunities, resources and connect.

D. In the future:

1. **86%** plan on telling their friends and family about AisB
2. **75%** plan on participating in alumni events/activities
3. **63%** would share AisB fundraising content/initiatives to their networks
4. **47%** would volunteer as a mentor
5. **33%** would volunteer with a VOTE campaign
6. **20%** would consider donating money

Qualitative Analysis

During the focus group sessions, when asked "**Has your RISE ambassador experience impacted or changed the way you think about civic engagement?**", the resounding answer was **yes**.

70% of alumni told us RISE expanded their awareness, knowledge, and perception of what constitutes civic engagement, as well as who has the agency and power to be a civic actor. Prior to joining the program, many alumni believed voting was the only major intervention method one could use to generate change. Participants told us RISE helped dismantle these limiting beliefs, by framing civic engagement as something community-led & tangible, versus something purely theoretical and detached from lived-experience.

→ *"Pre-RISE, I had never enjoyed civics class in high school, and I think I had a very theoretical perspective of what civics meant, but RISE really made me see the whole community aspect to civic engagement and the grassroots part of it that I just hadn't realized was so vital. I had never been around so many engaged youth before, and it was novel and very eye opening to shift the conversation from the theoretical & detached, to the work that's done on the ground."*

→ *"RISE completely changed my perspective of what civic engagement is. There are a lot of actions that can be considered civic engagement that are left out of the paradigm, the framework. That's one of the things that I really appreciated about Rise. You can be involved, you can be engaged, but you can also redefine what that civic engagement is."*

In addition to gaining perspective on the vast constellation of actions that embody civic engagement, alumni said RISE demonstrated the many benefits of active community participation, on both personal and external levels. On the individual level, several alumni shared their RISE experience was a significant confidence booster, one that made them realize their actions could inspire real change, even if they were "*just youth*".

→ *"I wish things that were taught in RISE were taught in school….. RISE made me realize that youth could run to be a MLA regardless of where their position was on the spectrum, that they could lead change, and it's very interesting to think that I could, with my actions, really affect the city."*

→ *"RISE helped me clarify the value of volunteering. Civic engagement goes beyond just voting, it's also the benefit you can get from being involved in your community and how that impacts your wellbeing but also others."*

On the collective level, alumni described learning that civic engagement creates stronger, more resilient communities with better problem solving abilities, and reduced barriers to participation. By being meaningfully involved in local community, you can push the dial of change forward, using methods that exist outside the traditional voting paradigm. On the topic of social inclusion, alumni noted that even if one can't vote due to status or other barriers, it doesn't mean you're absent from the conversation.

→ *"I really enjoyed RISE because it gave me the idea that voting is great, but civic engagement is much more than the people who represent you, who are overwhelmingly people who don't look like you, who don't necessarily think like you, and that can be very alienating for youth to see ourselves so little represented in these decision making chambers. But after RISE I realized well you know what? That's not where the civic engagement ends."*

When the conversations turned towards **barriers** to engagement, alumnsi identified 3 main factors:

1. **Lack of time**
2. **Lack of financial support/resources**
3. **Lack of qualification or accreditation**

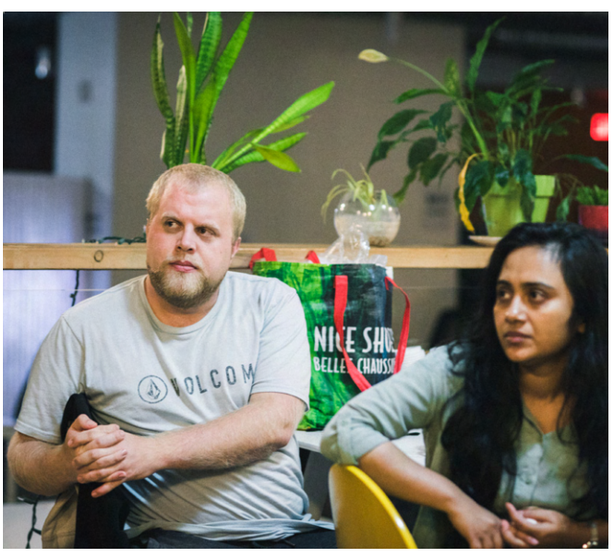
Time, being the only finite resource, was identified as the major barrier to greater community engagement. Juggling the school, work, and personal responsibilities understandably takes precedence, even if the desire and intention to engage further are there.

In addition to that, financial restrictions were also identified as a significant barrier, one that disproportionately affects marginalized youth. Alumni recognized that engagement is predicated on the idea that one's basic needs/safety are met, which inherently connotes a certain level of privilege:

→ *"I come from a background where I had to be independent pretty young… So if I want to make opportunities available to me, I have to be working on the side, and that can be overwhelming. That's why I feel that being engaged is an extra activity you can only allow yourself if you can fulfill your other needs or have the ability, the health, to do that because sometimes taking on a job or studying at the same time can be overwhelming for a person if they maybe have other disabilities or other disadvantages."*

Turning to potential engagements, we asked alumni in both short survey & focus groups, "How can AisB more meaningfully engage alumni?" Participants gave diverse feedback that generally fell under **6 categories** (*listed below*). However, despite the theme, nearly all answers shared the following sentiment:

- **Provide opportunities that are accessible & respect barriers like time & finances**
- **Offer activities that require different levels of commitment** *(from ad-hoc, to intermittent, to consistent).*



ENGAGEMENT THEMES

(How do alumni want to interact with us? What are they interested in)?

Meet-ups (networking AND social) = 36%

- Most alumni share the desire to attend facilitated social events (ideally in person) to connect both formally, and informally.
- From a formal lens, alumni demonstrated interest in networking events with mentors and local organizations, along with the opportunity to network & potentially collaborate with other alumni developing projects & initiatives.
- Informally, participants were keen on social "mixer" events to casually connect with peers, to keep the RISE community active & energized.

Group learning/skills building = 29%

- Alumni celebrated the range of skills they developed through RISE but wished the org offered opportunities/structures for continual learning.
- Most participants were interested in opportunities that would support career development and professional advancement.

Alumni projects/facilitated opportunities to create = 15%

- 15% of alumni, unprompted, voiced interest in engaging in projects similar to the pilot alumni program, offered in the winter of 2021.
- These alumni were curious about creating projects similar to RISE, albeit at a smaller scale, and with less oversight & support .

How to acquire grants/financial support/professional opportunities = 10%

- A small cohort of alumni, speaking to the lack of resources available to support community work, were interested in fund development/grant acquisition support and education.

In review

Both the quantitative & qualitative data illustrate RISE alumni have both continued to display engaged habits, and present a high probability of engaging with AisB in the future, if provided the right opportunities.

On a systems level, out of 10, alumni rated their likelihood to vote in the next municipal, provincial, and federal elections **8.8**, **9.2**, & **9** respectively. Given that only **63% of youth** voted in the 2019 federal election, **69%** in the last provincial election, and **54%** for municipal, RISE alumni are demonstrating levels of institutional engagement that are significantly higher than average.

Additionally, considering only **4.3% of Canadian youth** aged 15-30 volunteered for a political party or campaign in 2020, it's astonishing that **56% of alumni** have offered skills, time, or resources to support a campaign. This is impressive, given the program's curriculum is not focused on partisan politics and does not necessarily instruct around "traditional" political engagement tactics.

Thinking about engagement more broadly, only **33% of Canadian youth** have volunteered in the last 12 months. Using this metric as a benchmark, it's notable that **88% of alumni** have engaged with the org in some capacity since leaving the RISE program.

Turning to the future, the vast majority of alumni seem eager to continue their engagement journeys with Apathy is Boring, by way of events, co-creating initiatives, or attending skills oriented workshops. Alumni gave AisB a rating of **7/10**, when it comes to providing engagement opportunities. This means we're on the right track, however efforts could be put towards creating a consistent & accessible engagement framework that alumni can access immediately post-program, when creating that connection, and impetus to participate, is vital.

4. Network

A. **75%** of alumni strongly agree or agree when asked "*I still continue to engage with ambassadors I met from my cohort*"

B. **55%** of alumni strongly agree or agree when asked "*I still continue to engage with youth participants I met as a result of my participation in RISE.*"

C. **82%** of alumni strongly agree or agree when asked "*I feel more closely connected to my community as a result of my participation in RISE.*"

- This is in line with C1-C9 averages. **81%** of ambassadors agree/strongly agree that they developed connections with people working on issues they care about.

Qualitative Analysis

Trends from RISE evaluations illustrate that network building across all dimensions has traditionally been a program strength, and for alumni, it's no different.

When asked in the short survey "*How has the RISE program impacted you personally*", **40% of alumni**, unprompted, described the positive influences of the meaningful & authentic connections the program helped them create. Through these networks RISE facilitated, several alumni shared they have accessed professional and volunteer opportunities by leveraging these connections:

→ *"RISE provided me with a rich network in my city and across Canada, it has provided me with knowledge of organizations in my city and across the country, it has also provided me with skills and knowledge of how to create social engagement and community projects."*

→ *"I still keep in contact with everyone from my hub, and my program coordinator has been an incredible resource and mentor."*

Additionally, when asked in the short survey "*Reflecting back to your time at RISE, what are some highlights you reflect positively upon?*" a staggering **99% of alumni**, unprompted, mentioned the delight and fulfillment gained through the friendships developed in hub. Respondents noted how refreshing and exciting it was to be surrounded by energetic & like minded peers who shared the same goal of generating change:

→ *"I miss the positive, welcoming community, everyone was so warm and inviting. We built an amazing community project out of a simple idea!"*

→ *"I really enjoyed the retreats at the beginning and end of the program, and meeting youth from across the country who share the same passion for change. I was very inspired by the youth I met and by my RISE team. I am proud of the event we organized. I also felt supported by the AisB team throughout and after the program."*

The focus group data paints a very similar picture, one that's also aligned with RISE evaluation trends. Under the sub-category of "network building", peer network connection (relationships made in-hub with fellow alumni) has consistently been one of the program's highest performing metrics. It seems these connections have withstood the test of time, with 60% of focus group participants saying they are still connected, in a sincere way, to youth they met in-hub.

- → *"RISE definitely attracts like-minded people who want to make change. I'm still friends with individuals from cohorts one, two and three. I think RISE is a great program for folks who are new to a city, and who want to meet other changemakers and people who are interested in activism."*

- → *"I still talk to people in my cohort from Montreal but also from other cities. I was in Ottawa this weekend with people I met in RISE. It builds a little family, and also a safe space to have conversations that we don't necessarily have in class, or in normal life."*

The second most frequent comment made re:networks, was about RISE opening the door to rich & exciting community events, people, and opportunities. **28% of focus group participants** told us RISE made them aware of organizations they never would have interacted with, had they not been an ambassador. Several even noted that the connections RISE facilitated with other organizations, led to job opportunities & professional development:

- → *"RISE fundamentally changed my career path. Doing the program at a crossroads in my life has been the best decision ever. I made so many connections, and really expanded my horizons of what job positions to explore thanks to the opportunities I found after the program."*

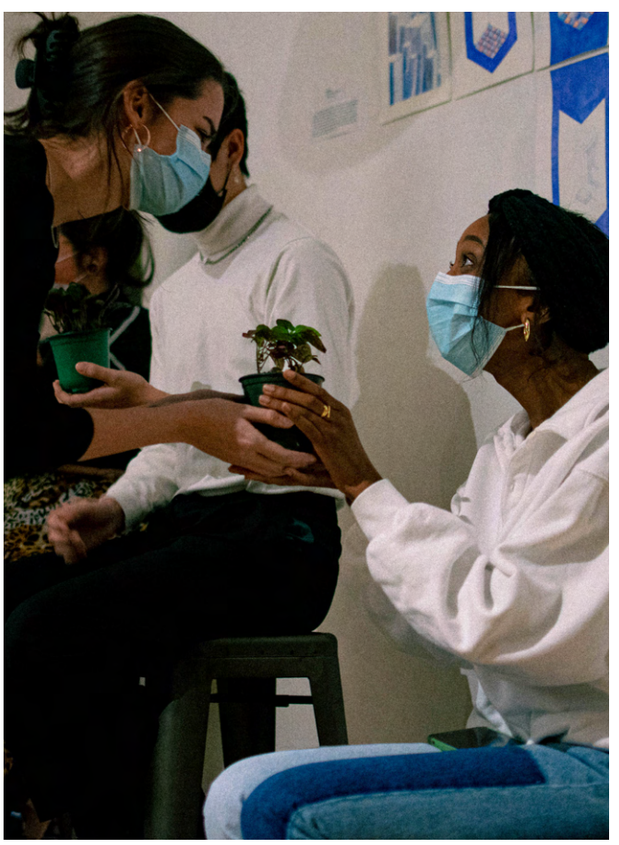
- → *"RISE introduced me to other organizations where I'm actually still a volunteer, and helped keep up the momentum I had to do community engagement."*

In review

As mentioned above, network development continues to be one of RISE's greatest strengths. Even though significant time has passed, 82% of alumni still continue to feel a deeper connection to their community as a result of RISE. This metric is directly in line with the 81% average of C1-C9[2].

It's also significant that despite any direct intervention or support networks provided by AisB, ¾ of alumni continue to organically engage with peers they met in hub.

Along with friendships, and access to a pan-Canadian network of engaged peers, the qualitative data supports that the networksRISE created, have successfully opened new doors for alumni both professionally, and for greater volunteer opportunities.



[2] 81% of C1-C9 ambassadors agree or strongly agree when asked "*Do you feel you have developed connections to the community/with people working on issues you care about.*"

5. Personal power/confidence

A. **72%** of alumni strongly agree or agree when asked "*I feel that I have the **skills** available to me, that I could start my own community initiative or project to address issues I perceive within my community.*"

B. **77%** of alumni strongly agree or agree when asked "*I feel that I have the **knowledge** available to me, that I could start my own community initiative or project to address issues I perceive within my community.*"

C. **41%** of alumni strongly agree or agree when asked "*I feel that I have the **resources** available to me, that I could start my own community initiative or project to address issues I perceive within my community.*"

D. In the RISE post survey when asked "*Do you feel you possess the skills, knowledge, and resources to initiate your own community project?*" the average agreement rate is **80%**.

Qualitative Analysis

In the survey & focus groups, the idea of personal power & confidence growth came up both prompted and unprompted. When asked "*Did you experience any personal growth through the RISE program? Do you feel you've evolved through your involvement with RISE?*" the following major themes came up:

- **Personal confidence was built & supported through the safe/brave space RISE created.**
- **This safe/brave space (mentioned frequently) stems from a bedrock of warm community members, like-minded peers, and a supportive coordinator.**
- **was established by access to a warm community & like minded peers.**
- **Confidence & sense of personal power is closely linked to, and predicated on network development & trust**
- **Developing skills without pressure/expectations sets the tone for learning without fear of judgment or criticism.**

Several alumni, both in the survey and the focus group, used the specific terms "safe" & "brave" space when discussing how the program impacted their personal growth. For many alumni, RISE was the first space where they felt encouraged to step outside their comfort zone, and speak up about personal issues like class, race, gender, and oppression. Alumni noted that despite their knowledge levels, or intersecting identities, the program felt inclusive and supportive. These elements were listed as factors that significantly impacted their confidence:

→ *"RISE really helped me remove the imposter syndrome that I used to have. Not completely, it's a work in progress but as a visible Muslim, there are a lot of spaces that I never really wanted to engage in because I always felt scared, and was not taken seriously…but RISE gave me strength to go into those places."*

→ *"RISE made me realize that I can make change, whether that's short term or long term. It made me realize that if I just step out of my comfort zone, I can make an impact on my community or even learn how to build a community. Finding RISE, I was able to learn that there are spaces that I can go into and actually take conversations into action."*

Another common theme was the impact felt from being exposed to a strong and diverse community of peers. Alumni discussed that for confidence to grow, it must be built on a strong foundation of vulnerability and support. Several focus group members recounted that having their strengths and positive qualities reflected back at them, affirmed and validated their ability to create impactful change:

- → *"Through RISE I gained confidence, and the ability to challenge my personal doubts constantly. Whereas before, I let those fears eat me up, and I didn't want to take up space. But now, even if I'm the youngest person in the room, I see the value I can bring forward. It's a huge growth. RISE contributed to that change of perspective, because I was surrounded by very supportive people."*

- → *"We were given opportunities post RISE, to be exposed to decision making spaces, where you meet other leaders and community leaders… and in the program you were surrounded by very supportive people and mentors that supported you through that phase. So that definitely helped me in that area, the confidence, but also facing my fears."*

Lastly, on the note of vulnerability, alumni were grateful that RISE facilitated a "safe" learning environment absent of pressure, judgment, or the expectation of perfection. They celebrated the opportunity they had to learn, and test out new skills & ideas alongside a cohort of supportive peers. Several noted the confidence developed within their hub ended up impacting and improving their professional pursuits:

- → *"Rise and AisB hold a very important place in my life. I joined Rise during a complicated period in my life and it instantly gave me the boost and tools I needed to be more confident in my social involvement but also in my professional life. After RISE, I was less afraid to speak up and defend my point of views."*

- → *"Everyone in my cohort had different levels of knowledge, but we weren't pressured to know everything or have done everything. That helped me feel so much more comfortable & confident in starting my own project, and moving towards a career in the environmental field, which I'm currently in, so yeah, RISE really affected my personal growth in a lot of ways."*

In review

Like network building, confidence & personal power development is also a noteworthy program strength. It's fascinating that with the exception of resources, the average % of alumni who believe they have the right skills and knowledge to initiate their own community project, is directly in line with the average from C1-C9. It's telling and reassuring that this conviction hasn't faded, despite several years having passed. This is a strong indication that the confidence alumni develop through RISE is long-lasting & profound.

The unique space the program is able to cultivate should also be celebrated. This brave space that encourages exploration, play, and growth, in turn cultivates a supportive network of dedicated learners. Then, through the support and encouragement of sympathetic peers, participants feel ready & able to take on new challenges and tackle complex discourse.

Brave/Safe Space = Strong/Supportive Networks = Ideal learning environment = Confidence and Personal Power.

6. Professional/skills development

A. **100%** of alumni strongly agree or agree when asked if "*RISE helped me develop skills and make decisions that positively impacted my career goals & professional life.*"

B. **94%** of alumni strongly agree or agree when asked "*I continue to use the skills I developed through RISE in my personal life.*"

C. **50%** of alumni reportedly continue to access mentorship opportunities gained as a result of RISE.

- This result represents a **24%** point decrease from the **74%** average of C1-C9.

Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative data paints an exciting picture of RISE's impact on alumni's professional choices & trajectories. When asked, "*Did RISE affect your professional goals and aspirations? Did your time as an ambassador impact any of your future career goals*", the answers were overwhelmingly positive, and full of examples that outline the program's myriad benefits. The feedback fell under **4 major themes**:

Skills development = 50 %

- Most alumni, when discussing professional experiences, told us they are still using skills they developed as ambassadors in both their careers and personal lives.
- They noted the skills gained through RISE provided a baseline of experience in areas/professions they were otherwise unqualified for, therefore increasing confidence.

Network development = 40%

- Potential career choices & professional opportunities were expanded and supported thanks to the networks developed in-hub.
- Many spoke specifically to their relationship with their coordinator, and how important it was to their professional growth.

Heightened Confidence = 40%

- Similar to notions discussed under "personal power", alumni celebrated the impact RISE had on their confidence, which encouraged embracing agency, and developing courage to take on new challenges, by applying for jobs in different sectors.

Growth via exposure to new ideas & opportunities = 28%

- Exposure to new concepts and information, such as anti-o discourse, decolonization, and grassroots organizing frameworks, were named by alumni as factors that influenced their professional goals & aspirations.

Skills development = 50 %

Alumni feedback around professional development mainly touched upon gaining lucrative soft & hard skills. Participants told us these transferable skills have come in handy in many different contexts both professionally and personally. Several alumni recounted that their RISE experiences continue to enhance their CV's, and have consistently expanded their job opportunities;

→ *"Yes! I still use the resources we have in our folder, and use my work with RISE in my portfolios and resumes. It's always something that is really interesting for potential employers and partners."*

→ *"RISE helped me gain skills to lead projects which have been super beneficial in my career"*

Additionally, several alumni spoke about gaining the realization that they were more than capable of expanding their reach, and applying for positions that previously felt outside their wheelhouse:

→ *"I graduated in poli-sci, but I wasn't sure what I wanted to do. Through RISE, I gained a little push of, "Okay, I can actually put things in place, and I actually have the skills, resources, and ability to do it".*

→ *"After RISE, I had the confidence to actually apply to jobs that I thought I could never get, but I actually did, now I'm working in a job I actually love. For me, everything really comes from RISE. Everything that I'm able to accomplish today either socially or at work or professionally really comes from RISE, that really gave me that confidence. The program had a very big impact on my life."*

Network-development =40%

The second major theme explored the program's extraordinary ability to create, nurture, and provide networks of care and encouragement. Alumni noted new professional pathways were introduced through being exposed to new peers, diverse community members, a constellation of grassroots organizations, and a knowledgeable coordinator. Speaking to the latter, several specifically noted how fundamental their support was to their personal growth:

→ *"Working for the Government of Alberta, I really feel like I'm able to affect the system and institution from the inside using the knowledge and language that I got from RISE. I have to thank my coordinator, who was very knowledgeable, and RISE, as the reason I got to where I have and the language I have and finding out more about my identity and myself as well."*

→ *"I still keep in contact with everyone from my hub, and my program coordinator has helped me tremendously with finding new opportunities."*

Confidence = 40%

Because RISE created a brave/safe space for learning & exploration, alumni noted they were able to develop the confidence required to initiate personal projects, while recognizing they had the agency to meet their goals and take up space.

→ *"RISE opened a lot of doors for me, especially in confidence. When I started, I wasn't really in the best place in my personal life. I wasn't doing a job that I enjoyed. I was really overqualified for the job I was doing, but I was just so scared and did not have the confidence and the tools maybe, to actually pursue what I wanted. So RISE really came and gave me this boost of confidence and the tools that I needed."*

→ *RISE was a huge boost in my confidence to remain in the field of social injustices and community work and types of projects that I wanted to work on, and be more involved with those in my work… It was a huge game changer for me. [RISE] opened so many doors for me. I met so many people. I got to do way more things that I wouldn't have been able to do without it.*

Exposure to new ideas and opportunities = 28 %

Alumni told us many of the concepts RISE explored (decolonization, anti-o, general social justice frameworks), were foregin to them before joining the program. Exposure to these concepts, coupled with the ability to create something tangible with them by way of the community project, provided alumni with new discursive avenues to play with:

→ *"RISE is probably where I can pinpoint the start of my lean towards labor issues. I think I really had never understood before RISE the scope of work that goes into grassroots organizing and especially mutual aid and how much of it is unpaid labor, and that fueled some work I did in universal basic income potential policy after, and I'm in the labor field now."*

→ *"When I joined RISE, I was studying health sciences, but I didn't know where I was going. But being a part of the program really opened up my perception of understanding the world, basically how connected everything is, and allowed me to explore different aspects of community, engagement, and organizing."*

In review

Even though RISE is not a professional advancement or development program, it still managed to have a significant impact on the career trajectories of alumni. Based on the preceding data, one can argue RISE is successful in this area due to **2 major factors**:

- **It's ability to create & cultivate strong networks.**
- **It's ability to foster an optimal learning environment that stimulates personal growth & confidence.**

These conditions create a perfect storm whereby alumni leave not only with the required skills to take on exciting professional roles, but with the conviction and inner knowledge that they can inhabit these roles.

The outlier metric, with only **50%** of alumni reporting they continue to access/leverage mentors/mentorships gained from the program, stands out against the remaining qualitative & quantitative evidence. It will be interesting to continue to track this metric for any shifts, as the program evolves.

V.
Recommendations

The following recommendations (segmented by timescale) are based on the knowledge research holds from managing the RISE evaluation process, insights/trends found in these reports, and the data analyzed above. These suggested methods and strategies are aimed towards improving our organizational capacity to meaningfully engage alumni.

The potential benefits of developing an efficacious & consistent alumni engagement framework would go beyond just supporting alumni. These systems, if implemented correctly, would improve and advance the RISE program by providing youth with a clear roadmap of future engagements, and a guaranteed and accessible community maintained by organizational capacity and resources. These assurances would encourage a wider pool of youth to join, reducing recruitment concerns, and ideally attracting a more diverse cohort of applicants.

Additionally, these strategies would enhance RISE's credibility within the CSC community, by positioning ourselves as a program with the proper bandwidth to cultivate long-term engagement and youth development on a scale far beyond 22 weeks.

Finally, ideally these recommendations will inform future iterations of the RISE evaluation process, by encouraging measurement models that can support tracking impact across longer periods.

SCALE: 6-12 MONTHS

I. **Offer alumni engagement opportunities to accommodate varying levels of commitment & engagement:**

- **a.** Results from the quantitative & qualitative data demonstrate alumni are exceptionally interested in engaging with the organization, across a wide spectrum of activities (*i.e workshops, skills development, social events, co-creating initiatives, etc*).
- **b.** Though the interest and excitement to engage further was homogenous, there were many different responses as to what *kind* of engagement was most attractive.
- **c.** In the interest of accessibility, and to accommodate different lifestyles, plan to offer **2-3** unique engagement opportunities in a fiscal year. That way, if alumni can't take part in one engagement, they can be reassured there will be other opportunities/choices available in the future.
- **d.** Offering a diverse set of engagement opportunities would create credibility amongst our supporters, and project the notion that AisB cares about its youth community, by investing resources, capacity, and time.

II. **Prioritize establishing the following opportunities:**

- **a.** Social mixers & networking opportunities (*formal & informal*):
  - i. **36%** of alumni requested these events. Consider establishing yearly alumni meetups in each hub city that correspond with a RISE project launch to begin.
  - ii. To scale up (*funding dependent*) plan an alumni retreat every **2-3 years** at MTI headquarters.
- **b.** Group learning/skills development workshops:
  - i. **29%** of alumni were interested in skills acquisition. Consider hosting quarterly workshops (*virtually, or hybrid*) that explore different topics at the intersection of career development, and community engagement.
  - ii. Distribute a short survey before planning the sessions, to align with alumni's interests & passions.
- **c.** Alumni "projects" & initiatives:
  - i. Although a minority expressed interest in this area (**15%**), there would still be sufficient engagement to launch a pilot version of an alumni council, or an alumni board that consults on new initiatives, projects, or offers strategic direction.

III. **Create a coalition of pan-Canadian partners who can support alumni engagement initiatives, networking, and professional development:**

- **a.** Acknowledging that establishing alumni engagement frameworks takes significant resources, consider creating a network of partners (*or more intentionally leveraging existing partnerships*) in each hub city that work in the following areas;
  - i. Youth engagement spaces (*i.e Cityhive, #Risingyouth*)
  - ii. Career/employment centers (*YES Montreal, Employment Ontario, Career Zone B.C*)
- **b.** Invite reps that represent these areas from each hub city to project launches, and wrap up celebrations. Use their presence and expertise to inspire ambassadors to continue their engagement journeys, while taking the pressure off the youth themselves to discover these opportunities/orgs for themselves.
- **c.** In exchange, offer AisB's extensive social media reach to promote these potential partner's initiatives and campaigns.

IV. **Establish a routine "pulse check" with all alumni 6 weeks after a cohort ends:**

- **a.** Research suggests that there is an important window which closes 6 weeks after a volunteer opportunity ends, where the chance of continued engagement drops dramatically.
- **b.** With the support of research, consider setting up quick touch points with ambassadors 6-8 weeks after a cohort, to encourage sustained engagement habits, and offer support/additional information if needed.
- **c.** This could be integrated into an official 6+week "post-mortem", where ambassadors can come together to discuss their projects successes, pain-points, and opportunities for improvement.

V. **Offer CV/Cover letter workshops post-program/after wrap-up:**

- **a.** Because **100%** of alumni surveyed told us they continue to use skills developed through RISE in their personal and professional lives, consider offering targeted support on how to leverage RISE skills across different professional contexts.

VI. **Use impressive metrics re: professional development, as a recruitment tool:**

- **a.** Using the previous metric as an example, consider using it as a recruitment/outreach tool, to market RISE as a program with a proven track record of advancing career opportunities.

VII. **Set up discord channel exclusively for alumni, and hire or appoint a community manager:**

- **a.** Create a discord channel for alumni only, where youth can exchange ideas, share projects, promote events and workshops, or just stay connected.
- **b.** Hire an alumni to be the community manager, or appoint an AisB employee to oversee the channel.
- **c.** Use the channel, rather than email, to keep alumni up to date on AisB events, opportunities, and new initiatives.
- **d.** It would also be a great communication channel to leverage for future research projects involving our alumni community.

SCALE: 12-24 MONTHS & BEYOND

I. **In the case of another longitudinal/longer scale research project aimed at alumni, consider offering bigger incentives, and developing an outreach strategy that involves both the communications and programs team:**

- **a.** Although a **51%** survey completion rate is adequate from a data analysis perspective, it's not ideal if the intention is to make broad and accurate assessments of our alumni community.
- **b.** For this report, $20 Amazon gift cards were offered to complete the survey, and $50 for participating in a focus group. Despite this offering, only 13 alumni participated (*out of an initial 22~*) who signed up for a focus group session.
- **c.** To increase engagement, and the accuracy of future reports, consider developing an outreach plan that involves the RAD, communications, & programs team, and include each team at the earliest stage possible.
  - i. Programs team: Involve them to engage former coordinators, who hold close relationships with alumni, thereby increasing the chances of dialogue and interest.
  - ii. Comms team: Leverage social media to connect with alumni (through posts, stories, swipe ups, etc), while ensuring there's a method in place to filter out non-alumni from participating.

II. **Leverage coalition of engagement partners to establish a RISE "co-op" program:**

- **a.** Once a solid and reliable network of post-program engagement partners has been established, consider creating an initiative that follows a university co-op model, by providing alumni with paid opportunities supported/facilitated by career/employment centers.

III. **Refine the RISE curriculum, and create engagement opportunities, that address major barriers to civic participation:**

- **a.** Alumni identified 3 major reasons behind why they, and their peers, refrain from deeper engagement:
  - i. Lack of time
  - ii. Lack of financial support/resources
  - iii. Lack of qualification or accreditation
- **b.** Acknowledging this, consider strategies that can alleviate these restrictions, and encourage youth from underprivileged communities to volunteer with greater ease and enjoyment.
- **c.** Options could include
  - i. Offering free child-care (*both during hub nights, and throughout the week, to account for work completed outside the hub*).
  - ii. Finding grants/subsidies that could pay ambassador's to participate.
  - iii. Offering a RISE "lite"- a version of the program that requires a reduced time commitment.
  - iv. Figure out a way to convert RISE into an "accredited" program- that alumni can add to their CV's/LinkedIn profiles, to add a professional edge.

IV. **Create a new position "Alumni Outreach Coordinator":**

- **a.** Funding dependent, consider expanding the comms team to include a position specifically targeted towards implementing and managing an alumni engagement strategy.
- **b.** This position would relieve the workload required to effectively communicate with alumni from the rest of the team, while providing additional support for recruitment and outreach.

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