

2019 PROGRAM REPORT

Interactive Ontario



interactive **ontario**



OVERVIEW

OUR VISION

Ensuring Black youth have experience, credentials, and networks to compete for available jobs

Interactive digital media is a growth sector. In our February 2017 report *Measuring Success: The Impact of the Interactive Digital Media Sector in Ontario*, companies reported projected growth in both FTEs and revenues. The Entertainment Software Association of Canada's 2017 *Essential Facts about the Video Game Industry* reported that Ontario's direct employment grew by 32% from 2015 to 2017.

IDM is a sector that offers excellent employment prospects for young people. The average age of employees is 31 years old. 83% report an average age under 40.

But the sector lacks diversity. We believe that more diverse companies will create better products. While also representing more views. While at the same time providing economic opportunities for Black youth.

Funded by the Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. Under the Network of Services for Black Children, Youth, and Families. Formerly known as The Black Youth Action Plan. Our programs include two distinct initiatives, designed to reach Black youth in two different phases of their training and career development.

- The apprenticeship program for recent graduates or otherwise preparing to begin their careers
- A workshop series on careers in interactive digital media for high school students

Recruiting participants through Interactive Ontario's communications channels, the social networks of participating companies and outreach to academic institutions and partner organizations. In 2019 we improved the quality (outcome) of the workshops and as a by-product enhanced the quantity (output).



PROGRAM FIDELITY

IPPRENTICESHIP

- Summer cohort
- Black youth who are recent graduates or preparing to begin their careers
- Week-long paid placements at leading interactive digital media companies
- Participants participate in job shadowing, meetings, and workshops
- The program culminates with a networking dinner
- Complimentary attendance at two Interactive Ontario events
- Expand their list of professional contacts
- Interactive Ontario showcases a short video documenting the program
- Participants receive a \$1000 honorarium upon completion

DIGITAL DIVE

- Workshop series on careers in interactive digital media
- High school students
- Host the program in both Toronto and Ottawa
- 20 students in Ottawa take part
- 20 students in Toronto take part
- A two-day weekend session featuring multiple workshops on topics to include:
 - Resumes, Interviewing and Job Hunting
 - Interactive Digital Media Industry Overview / Career Options in Interactive Digital Media
 - Breakout workshops: Writing or art for Interactive Digital Media
 - Breakout workshops: Programming for e-Learning, games or VR/AR
- Studio Tour (optional)

OVERVIEW OF FIDELITY (MILESTONES)

- 100% on both fidelity scores
- 130+ ipprenticeship applications
- 4 ipprenticeship placements
- 100% of ipprentices report expanding their list of industry contacts
- 6 Digital Dive workshops
- 110+ High schoolers/participants expressed interest in taking part in Digital Dive
- 42 Digital Dive participants in Toronto and Ottawa both online and offline
- Studio Tours were postponed due to COVID-19 concerns

IPPRENTICESHIP GOALS

4/4

of Ipprentices

**REPORT RECEIVING A
POSITIVE REFERENCE
FROM IPPRENTICESHIP
HOST**

75

% of Ipprentices

**ARE EMPLOYED OR
HAVE RETURNED TO
SCHOOL**

OVERVIEW OF GOALS

- 100% of ipprentices reported a meaningful ipprenticeship experience
- Host companies included; Ubisoft Toronto, Uken Games, CBC, and Kindly Beast (Ottawa)
- Maintained contact with 3/4 ipprentices
- 1 ipprentice we do not know if they're employed or if they have returned to school

DIGITAL DIVE GOALS



36/42

of Participants

**REPORT BEING
BETTER EQUIPPED TO
SELECT COURSES**



53K

Views

ON SOCIAL MEDIA

OVERVIEW OF GOALS

- 100% of participants self-report a positive experience
- 75% of participants parents and safe and caring Adults requested information about related events and other workshops
- Ottawa - 26 participants off/online and Toronto - 16 participants off/online
- Digital Dive benefited from partnering with Groundroots in Ottawa, Groundroots overubscribed the workshop because parents were excited about a free workshop led by Black instructors

PROGRAM PERFORMANCE

110

Performed beyond expectations

QUALITY OF THE PROGRAMS

Digital Dive benefited from what lead instructor Jordan Sparks brought to the workshop series. His holistic approach to the instruction increased participants feelings of accomplishment. Ipprenticeship performed with greater optimism for future iterations.

110

Performed beyond expectation

COST OF THE PROGRAMS

Instead of hiring multiple instructors at various fees we offered small honorariums to a council of professionals and past participants to help define Digital Dive '19 scope. We also invested in a social media team and face-face stakeholder engagement in Ottawa to promote Digital Dive.

100

Performed at expectation

TIMING OF THE PROGRAMS

Video production took longer than expected and this impacted post-production activities.

RISK MITIGATION PLAN

#'S

In Ottawa

OUTREACH, MARKETING, AND PROMOS IN OTTAWA?

Our outreach in Ottawa was impacted by both school instability and protest that reduced our opportunity to travel to Ottawa. To offset these fall backs we hired a social media team and worked with grassroots community groups in Ottawa (Orleans) to recruit at least 20 participants.

WHERE?

to host the workshops

DIGITAL SPACES IN TORONTO & OTTAWA

Partnering institutions (OCAD U, Ottawa U, & Humber College and Libraries) were unable to provide us Digital Dive access to digital labs because of internal booking priorities, safety and access codes given to non students, and longer term partnership requirements. Renting affordable laptops and booking community space mitigated this barrier for Digital Dive.

HOST

Communication Plan

COMMUNICATION PLANS WITH HOST

Unlike in previous years Ipprenticeship host were briefed on the importance of good communication and it proved to be effective as the communication and feedback loop between IO and the host companies was flawless.

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

START

- Like last year we learned that parents play a role in participants applying to take part, so how might we dedicated a % of our public relation and marketing activities to focus on parents and safe and caring Adults?
- The demand for Digital Dive-like workshops is high in Ottawa, but marketing and promotions look very different in Ottawa than it does in Toronto, how might we use the artifacts and methodologies we got from the social media team to market in Ottawa?
- Co-creating our employment readiness activities with IDM sector experts and not general employment practices because the 2 differ in many important ways
- Co-editing with the videographer to improve the story being told
- Enhance post placement communication and peer-peer support between ipprentices and IO

CONTINUE

- Youth are already emerged in building technology (i.e. Scratch) and providing them access to marketable tools instead of just marketable skills helps them to better communicate what they can offer in the IDM sector
- Immersion, when you give the students easy to use tools, they want to use the tools and they want to practice (i.e. Unity and Twine)
- The ipprenticeship dinner is a great opportunity for intergenerational conversation
- We learned the importance of creating online access for Youth to take part in Digital Dive workshops (pre-COVID-19)
- In 2018 we interviewed consultants, in 2019 we created an advisory council to inform Digital Dive scope for 2019
- Create multiple engagement points for participants to practice employment readiness after they are introduced to employment readiness skills

STOP

- Eventbrite doesn't work well with the Youth we spoke to, how might we create more Youth-friendly ways to register and take part i.e. social media
- Having the videographer lead the storyboarding for the ipprenticeship video
- Offering the workshops as only an in-person option
- Offering the workshop as a one one-day event (as in 2018)

HIGH-LEVEL SUGGESTIONS



CREATE

- A marketing plan that includes a partial focus on getting the word out to Parents and Safe and Caring Adults of Aspiring Black Game Developers age 13-19
- Improved communication with Ipprentices post Ipprenticeship

ENHANCE

- Access points such as online portals, USB keys with workshops, and in-person workshops for participants to take part in Digital Dive workshops

REDUCE

- Stakeholder engagement with community organizations such as Boys and Girls Clubs and Pathways to Education when we can invest in grassroots community groups/collectives such as Groundroots and Youth Ambassador Network
- The use of traditional employment readiness tools

ELIMINATE

- Interview style ipprenticeship video in favor of telling a more concise story of why and how Youth get connected to ipprenticeship, and what and where do they do their job shadowing