Evaluation Report for Aunt Leah’s SEFFY Program
(Supporting Education For Foster Youth)
December 7, 2018
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OVERVIEW

Aunt Leah’s Place (ALP) contracted McCreary Centre Society to carry out an independent evaluation of its Supporting Education for Foster Youth (SEFFY) program, from April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019.

The SEFFY drop-in program supports youth and young adults with their education planning and goals. The evaluation assessed how much SEFFY has helped participants with their academic planning and goals, and canvassed participants’ suggestions for how the program could be improved. The evaluation also captured the degree to which three recent policy changes have affected program participants, specifically the availability of free Adult Basic Education (for high-school level courses); the BC tuition waiver program for youth from government care to attend post-secondary education; and changes to Agreements with Young Adults (AYA), specifically an increase in the age limit from 24 to 27 years and an extension to the length of time a young person can receive benefits (to 48 months).

Another goal of the evaluation process was to support Aunt Leah’s in creating a plan and meaningful tools (e.g., participant survey) so that SEFFY evaluation activities can be internally sustained in the future, perhaps with external support to analyze evaluation data the program collects.
EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The mixed-method evaluation included a participant survey, as well as separate focus groups/interviews with program participants, Aunt Leah’s staff and managers, and other stakeholders (e.g., referring agencies and agencies that distribute bursaries to program participants).

Information Sources

Youth survey

The evaluation incorporated the youth survey that was used at SEFFY since 2016 by one of the program’s funders, Community Foundations of Canada’s Youth Catalyst Fund. This snapshot (point-in-time) survey includes questions about whether participants are currently in school (but does not differentiate between high school and post-secondary); if they are employed or volunteering; their goals for next year; how they feel about themselves and their skills; their connection to their community; how long they have been involved in the program; how the program has helped them; and suggestions to improve the program.

McCreary also added survey questions which assessed the following:

- If youth were currently in high school or post-secondary
- Their educational aspirations
- Reasons they wanted to pursue their education (employment-related, etc.)
- If they were on an Agreement with Young Adults (AYA) or Youth Agreement (YA)
- If they had received financial support through the program, including a bursary to pursue post-secondary education
- If they had learning difficulties or FASD, and if they received formal testing for learning challenges
- Supports they needed to help them graduate from high school (if applicable)
- If they were aware that Adult Basic Education is now free in BC, and whether they have pursued this opportunity (if applicable)
- Barriers to pursuing post-secondary education
- Whether they were aware of the province’s tuition waiver program, and if they have applied for and been granted a tuition waiver.
- Who, if anyone, expected them to succeed academically
- How they can best be supported to succeed academically
- Any other ways the program could support participants academically and help them reach their education goals.

The survey was available in paper-and-pencil format for participants to complete at SEFFY’s drop-in. The survey was also available online, for program staff to distribute to participants who were no longer accessing the drop-in.
Youth focus groups/interviews

McCreary facilitated a focus group with program participants to supplement the survey data with more in-depth information about participants’ experiences in the program and with pursuing their education.

The focus groups included questions about how participants defined academic success; barriers to graduating from high school and pursuing post-secondary education; their experiences with the provincial tuition waiver program (challenges and successes); their knowledge and experiences around Adult Basic Education; how (if at all) changes to the AYA program have affected their educational pursuits; supports they needed to achieve academic success; how SEFFY was helping them with their education as well as employment opportunities, and any suggestions they might have for the program.

Participants who were interested in sharing their feedback but were unable to attend a focus group, or who felt more comfortable taking part in a one-on-one interview, were invited to take part in a phone interview.

Focus groups/interviews with Aunt Leah’s staff and other stakeholders

Focus groups/interviews took place with Aunt Leah’s staff and managers familiar with the SEFFY program. They were asked about program successes, challenges, and lessons learned to best support youth in and from care with their education.

Interviews also took place with other stakeholders (e.g., SEFFY Advisory Committee members, referring staff from other Aunt Leah’s programs, social workers, representatives from post-secondary institutions). They were asked about their experience with SEFFY and the referral process; their views of program challenges and successes; and any recommendations they had for the program.

Evaluation Participants

Youth

A total of nine program participants took part in a focus group or individual interview, while 55 SEFFY participants (75% females) completed a survey. Youth received gift card honoraria for their participation.

Survey respondents were aged 17 or older (33% were 25 or older). They most commonly identified their family background as European (51%) and/or Indigenous (40%), and they also identified as Latin/South/Central American (9%), South Asian, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Australian/Pacific Islander, African, and East Asian (youth could mark all responses that applied to them). A few indicated not knowing their family background.

The majority of participants who completed a survey had accessed SEFFY multiple times, including around a quarter who had accessed program supports more than 15 times.
ALP staff & managers

Twelve Aunt Leah’s staff and managers took part in a focus group or individual phone interview. They either worked in SEFFY or in other Aunt Leah’s programs which referred young people to SEFFY.

External stakeholders

Ten stakeholders outside Aunt Leah’s were interviewed about their experience with SEFFY. The majority took part in a phone interview, while a couple submitted written responses to the questions through email.

Stakeholders included workers who referred youth to SEFFY to access education supports; those who received referrals from SEFFY (e.g., for youth to access employment support, government assistance, or other funding); and those who partnered with SEFFY to offer workshops or tutoring to youth at Aunt Leah’s.

The stakeholders were youth workers, social workers, education support workers, tutors, employment counsellors, and representatives from post-secondary institutions.

About this Report

All quantitative analyses were conducted using SPSS Statistics. Percentages that represented a very small number of youth were not reported due to risk of deductive disclosure. These findings were reported descriptively instead.

Any comparisons and associations in this report are statistically significant at $p < .05$. This means there is less than a 5% likelihood the results occurred by chance.

In this report, “stakeholders” refers to evaluation participants external to Aunt Leah’s Place.
YOUTH PARTICIPANTS

Background

Among the 55 youth who completed a survey, most had been in foster care, a group home, and on a Youth Agreement. A little under half had been on an Agreement with Young Adults (AYA), and a third had been placed in a custody centre at some point.

The majority had received government funding, such as Income Assistance (56%, including 22% currently), Person with Disability benefits (PWD; 42%, including 38% currently), and/or a Youth Educational Assistance Fund (YEAF; 15%).

Health conditions and disabilities

Most survey respondents (76%) indicated having a health condition or disability, including a mental health condition (57%), ADHD (24%), substance addiction (28%), FASD, physical disability, and/or sensory disability (they could mark all that applied).

Also, a third of respondents indicated that a professional had tested them for learning challenges, and 26% reported having a learning disability.
**Indicators measured by the Youth Catalyst Fund**

A series of survey questions distributed by the Youth Catalyst Fund (SEFFY’s funder) asked participants how they currently felt about themselves in a range of areas. Respondents were asked to mark each item on a scale of 1 (“No, I don’t feel that way”) to 6 (“Yes, I do feel that way”).

The highest average ratings among SEFFY participants pertained to feeling they had goals for the future; feeling they had good skills; and knowing where to go to get the help they needed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How I feel right now…</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>(participants’ average scores, ranging from 1 to 6)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have goals for the future</td>
<td>4.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have good skills</td>
<td>4.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know where to go to get the help I need</td>
<td>4.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know what I want to be</td>
<td>4.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confident the actions I take will be successful</td>
<td>4.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have the kind of support I need</td>
<td>3.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a lot to contribute</td>
<td>3.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good about myself</td>
<td>3.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steady</td>
<td>3.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I fit in</td>
<td>3.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connected to my community</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. This question was part of the survey distributed by SEFFY’s funder, Community Foundations of Canada’s Youth Catalyst Fund.*

**Work and school**

Around a third of survey respondents (34%) reported they were currently working part-time, while 11% were working full time. A few indicated they were currently volunteering and/or apprenticing.

Most youth aged 19 or older (61%) had graduated from high school. Participants who had not graduated most commonly indicated that Grade 12 was the last grade they had attended (ranged from Grade 8 to 12).

Thirty percent were currently enrolled in school, including 21% who were in post-secondary. When asked about their school plans, 19% indicated they did not expect to finish high school, whereas 74% planned to continue their education after high school. The remaining few indicated they had not thought about it or did not know their plans for school.

When asked an open-ended survey question about their goals for the next year, youth described wanting to finish high school; enroll in or complete post-secondary education; gain more training experience and certifications; learn to drive and obtain their license; to find and maintain a meaningful job; and to focus on supporting their children and their children’s education (among those with children).
Views on Education

“[Academic success] means being happy where you are, academically speaking.”

When asked in the focus group what academic success meant to them, some youth regarded it as doing well in school and achieving their academic goals, while others saw it as enjoying and feeling satisfied with their education experience. One youth commented that enjoyment was not often discussed in the context of school, and felt it should be. Participants added that for some young people, academic success might mean showing up to class whereas for others it might be more defined by grades.

Experiencing support from teachers and other school staff was identified as conducive to youth’s success at school. Some said they would not have done well in school, or would not currently be doing well, if not for supportive teachers and those who understood their situation outside of school. Youth said that even the presence of a few supportive staff in a school made for a positive environment which fostered their academic success.

Youth survey respondents who wanted to pursue their education (91%) identified a number of reasons for wanting to do so. They most commonly reported a desire for a meaningful job or career, and to make changes in their lives.

![Most commonly reported reasons that participants wanted to pursue their education (among survey respondents who wanted to do so)]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I want a meaningful job or career</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To make changes in my life</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t want to work low paid jobs</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want a sense of accomplishment</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part of my Agreement with Young Adults (AYA)</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Youth could mark all that applied.

Graduating from high school

Participants in the focus group talked about the importance of graduating from high school because it helped with finding jobs. However, they identified barriers that youth in and from care might experience in regard to graduating from high school. For example, they felt there was a lack of adults who encouraged and supported them to graduate.

Focus group participants felt that adults’ general expectation was that youth in and from care would not graduate. As a result, these youth needed to actively seek out school-related support, including financial support, if they required it. In contrast, participants felt that young people without care experience were expected to succeed at school, and their parents/caregivers supported them to do so, such as by encouraging them to complete their homework and to study, helping them with their school work, and providing financial support. Participants also said that access to food and transit were difficult for some youth from care to secure, which created barriers to succeeding at school and to graduating.
While those in the focus group talked about adults not expecting youth in and from care to do well at school, most participants who completed a survey (79%) identified at least one adult who expected them to succeed at school. These adults included family members (60%), Aunt Leah’s staff (57%), their adult friends (42%), and teachers or other school staff (36%; youth could mark all that applied).

Survey respondents identified supports they needed in order to graduate from high school (or supports that had helped them to graduate). The most commonly identified were financial support, help with setting and achieving their goals, and being able to work at their own pace.

### Supports that youth identified they needed to help them graduate from high school (or which had helped them graduate)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial support</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support with setting and achieving goals</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being able to work at my own pace</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults encouraging me that I can do well at school</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers who are understanding of my situation</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health support/counselling</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-to-1 support</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help with school work/preparing for tests</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer support</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good communication among adults who support me</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help with learning good study habits</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School staff who would notice if I didn’t attend school</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare support while attending class</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staying at the same school (not changing schools)</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare support while doing school work outside of class</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Youth could mark all that applied.
Pursuing post-secondary education

Some focus group participants felt it was not important to pursue post-secondary education, whereas others felt it was. Some specified they felt it was important to pursue a trade program or training to help them secure a stable job and career. A few commented that private post-secondary institutions tended to offer more relevant training for the job market than did public institutions.

When asked about challenges that youth from care might experience in relation to pursuing post-secondary education, some youth mentioned not knowing what they wanted to do for a job or career, and therefore not knowing what post-secondary program to pursue. They also identified a general lack of awareness of the post-secondary programs available to them, as well as lack of awareness of the supports available to help youth from care pursue post-secondary education.

Other barriers they identified were lack of motivation to go to school, as well as anxiety and fear of failure. One comment was that simply thinking about pursuing post-secondary can be overwhelming, and therefore youth might avoid doing so. Some youth who had pursued post-secondary education commented that they had not expected the workload to be so heavy, which was a barrier to completing their program. School-related costs and fees were also identified as a challenge, including application fees and the high cost of applying to multiple post-secondary institutions, as well as the cost of textbooks.

Among program participants who completed a survey, their mental health challenges were the most commonly identified barriers to pursuing post-secondary education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers to pursuing post-secondary education (among those who tried pursuing it)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mental health challenges</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was unaware of opportunities for financial support</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I didn't feel I belonged</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I've had to work, so couldn't pursue my education</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a child/children</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers were not flexible to my needs</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough on-campus support</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I haven’t been eligible for financial support</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I didn’t get enough support with registering for classes</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough guidance with how to apply for school</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nobody encouraged me to go</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Youth could mark all that applied.

Program participants’ comments...

“The thought of [post-secondary] can be overwhelming and stressful.”

“No one tells you really how much work there is to do [in post-secondary].”
EFFECTS OF RECENT EDUCATION-RELATED POLICY CHANGES

Evaluation participants were asked about three relatively recent policy changes in BC and the extent to which these changes might have affected the SEFFY program or program participants. These changes were modifications to Agreements with Young Adults (AYAs), and specifically an extension of the age limit from 24 to 27 and an extension in the length of time youth could access benefits (to 48 months); Adult Basic Education becoming free for high-school level courses; and the provincial tuition waiver program for post-secondary institutions for youth from care.

Stakeholders connected to MCFD said that changes to AYAs and the tuition waiver program have led to increased interest among youth to pursue their education. Similarly, stakeholders connected to post-secondary institutions said they have seen more young people applying to programs at their school due to these changes, and higher enrollment figures as a result. In addition, some students who were already enrolled at school could now access provincial funding for longer, which could help them avoid the debt associated with student loans. Other stakeholders also said that many of the youth they worked with were taking advantage of the AYA changes and tuition waiver to pursue their education.

Most stakeholders were unsure how these changes might have affected the SEFFY program, and some said it was too early to know. Many surmised that the greater interest among youth from care in pursuing their education might have increased the number of referrals to SEFFY, in addition to staff’s workload, because more youth were seeking support to navigate the education and government systems. Some stakeholders said that awareness of the SEFFY program among youth and adult supports had increased since these policy changes came into effect, because more people were talking about the supports that SEFFY offered. Stakeholders also thought these changes may have helped to alleviate some of the financial burden for SEFFY because more provincial funds were now available for youth to pursue their education.

Aunt Leah’s staff had not noticed any changes (e.g., increases) in the number of youth who were accessing SEFFY as a result of these policy changes. They said there were barriers to accessing the tuition waiver (e.g., many youth were not eligible due to grade requirements or because they came from another province), and the criteria were not consistent across all post-secondary institutions which created confusion for many youth. Also, many of the youth they worked with were older and no longer eligible for an AYA, so staff did not notice any changes in that regard.

However, SEFFY staff said that although the number of youth accessing SEFFY did not increase, there was a change in program participants’ attitudes about pursuing their education. Specifically, they were more motivated and enthusiastic about following through with reaching their education goals because the AYA changes and the tuition waiver program offered them more support to do so.

Over half of survey respondents (57%) indicated they were aware that Adult Basic Education (for high school courses) was now free in BC, and a total of 17% had accessed it. However, none of the focus group participants were aware of this, and they did not know of anyone accessing Adult Basic Education in BC.
Globally, 13 of survey respondents indicated they knew about the BC tuition waiver program. This included 19% who had received a tuition waiver and 20% who were aware of the waiver but did not apply for one. A few youth had applied but had not received one.

Some focus group participants had heard about the tuition waiver program, and a few indicated they currently had a tuition waiver. Some expressed confusion with the eligibility criteria and others felt there was lack of clarity with the application process, including not knowing the status of the application once it was submitted. However, one youth commented that the application process, and obtaining a tuition waiver, had been straightforward for them. All those who had accessed a tuition waiver said that SEFFY staff had helped them apply, and they expressed gratitude for the support they had received.

A few focus group participants who had not heard about the tuition waiver program indicated they had moved to BC from another province and wondered if they were eligible. Others who had not heard about it said they would consider accessing a tuition waiver if eligible.

In regards to changes to the AYA, a few youth said they were grateful the age limit was extended because it would benefit them directly. Others felt that an AYA was not an appropriate fit for them and were not interested in applying, while a couple said they would have liked to access an AYA but were not eligible.

“
Youth are now more eager to dream about the possibility of pursuing their education, to really consider it as an option.”—Aunt Leah’s staff
SEFFY PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

In addition to discussing the effects of systemic barriers and policy changes on youth in and from care, evaluation participants were asked specifically about their experience with SEFFY and how this program supports youth in and from care with their education.

Referral Process

SEFFY staff explained there was a brief referral form for staff at referring agencies and other Aunt Leah’s programs to complete, to collect basic information about prospective program participants. SEFFY staff added that the referral form was not always necessary for outside referring agencies because the idea was to follow-up with the youth directly for a one-on-one discussion to gain more information from them, including on their education goals.

Aunt Leah’s staff and external stakeholders described the referral process to SEFFY as straightforward and low-barrier. Stakeholders said they were not required to complete a referral form to connect youth to SEFFY. Some said that youth were able to contact SEFFY staff directly to start accessing services through the program, but a few of these stakeholders noted they were unsure how many of the youth followed through with accessing supports through SEFFY. Other stakeholders said they phoned SEFFY staff to set up the first meeting for the youth, or simply walked into the Aunt Leah’s building with the youth to connect them to program staff. They said it was easy to connect with SEFFY staff through email, phone, and in person.

For internal referrals, staff explained that when a youth expressed interest in accessing education- and employment-related supports, their Aunt Leah’s worker connected the youth to SEFFY staff. They noted that either SEFFY staff met with the youth immediately (i.e., if SEFFY staff were available and in the building when the youth was there) or the youth completed a form, with their worker’s support, and SEFFY staff followed-up with them soon after.

Supports Offered

Aunt Leah’s staff and stakeholders described SEFFY as offering youth an opportunity to explore their education and employment options, based on their needs and goals. Youth focus group participants explained that SEFFY staff first met with them to create an education plan. This involved youth exploring their education and employment goals and how they planned to achieve those goals. They were also encouraged to identify potential barriers they might encounter. Youth said that SEFFY staff encouraged them to do this work on their own, such as researching the school programs available to them. They added that SEFFY staff were always available to support and guide them through the process as needed.

Youth said that SEFFY staff helped them not only with their education and employment goals, but with all aspects of their lives (e.g., offered guidance to parenting participants on how to work cooperatively to co-parent). Program staff also referred participants to any services they needed, including mental health counselling. Program participants said they valued all the support they received through SEFFY.

Education supports

Staff, stakeholders, and youth explained that SEFFY offered a range of education supports, tailored to each program participant. These included support to complete high school and to navigate the post-secondary application process (including help with completing forms and accessing transcripts). The program also supported youth to attend information sessions and school tours (e.g., provided
childcare support to parenting youth so they could attend an information session), helped them register for classes, and liaised with youth’s schools when needed.

Other education supports were offered through project partners, including a literacy organization which provided one-on-one tutoring at Aunt Leah’s. This agency also facilitated group sessions, such as a workshop on math, to make math feel less intimidating and more applicable to youth’s daily lives. Other agencies also offered skills-based workshops and information sessions at Aunt Leah’s, pertaining to accessing post-secondary education (e.g., accessing funding, the application process). Also, through a partnership with another agency, SEFFY was able to provide a computer and specialized software to some youth with learning challenges in order to meet their needs. A few youth participants commented that they had received a laptop to assist them with their studies, which they very much appreciated.

Evaluation participants said that SEFFY helped youth to access external bursaries and other funding—including the provincial tuition waiver program—as well as the in-house bursaries to support youth with their education. These in-house bursaries included financial support to cover youth’s application fees and to pay for their school supplies. Further, Aunt Leah’s staff explained that youth on an AYA did not receive funding in the summer months when school was not in session, so SEFFY bridged that gap by offering youth rental subsidies during the summer so they would not lose their housing.

In addition, the program connected some youth to assessment services to gain a better understanding of their psycho-educational needs and the best ways to support them with their education.

Most survey respondents who accessed school-related supports through SEFFY reported they had received support to set and achieve their education goals. Around half had received encouragement and reassurance through SEFFY that they could do well at school. Youth also reported receiving financial support through SEFFY, including around a third who received a bursary to pursue post-secondary education; about a quarter who received a bursary to complete high school (or the equivalent); and around a third who received Skills and Development funds for wellness programs or certification/training (driving lessons, training courses, recreation pass, art lessons, camp, etc.). Around a quarter reported receiving other financial support through SEFFY, and when asked to specify they identified receiving daycare support for their children; funding for textbooks, software, and school supplies; and transportation support (e.g., transit pass or tickets).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School-related supports that program participants reported receiving through SEFFY</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support with setting educational goals</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support with achieving my educational goals</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouragement that I can do well at school</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills and Development funds</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bursary for post-secondary education</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help with homework, preparing for tests, etc.</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other financial support</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bursary for high school upgrade or graduation</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gained good study habits</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Youth could mark all that applied.
In addition, 26% of survey respondents reported they had received tutoring through SEFFY. Also, in response to an open-ended question, survey respondents who were parenting and attending school indicated they had received support through SEFFY to find and pay for daycare for their children.

**Employment supports**

Aunt Leah’s staff said that while employment support was not the main focus of SEFFY, the program helped youth in this area. For example, the program offered youth support with job hunting and “career cruising” to explore employment opportunities. Staff worked one-on-one with youth to help them apply for jobs, and went to job sites with some youth to support them with the application process.

SEFFY staff invited program partners to facilitate employment workshops at Aunt Leah’s, including on interview skills and on writing résumés and cover letters. Program staff also referred youth to an employment agency which connected youth to employers in their field of interest.

Aunt Leah’s staff explained that youth can also access SEFFY’s Skills and Development fund to take part in short-term training and certification opportunities, such as FoodSafe, First Aid, WHMIS (occupational health and safety training), bartending, forklift training, barista training, and other types of classes (e.g., photography) to help them find a job and/or reach their career goals. Staff and external stakeholders added that short-term training in an area where many jobs are available (e.g., forklift training) can be a better fit for some youth than attending lengthy and costly academic programs.

Through their partnership with an employability skills program, SEFFY supported youth to get their Learner’s driver’s license. Youth took part in two workshops which helped them learn the study material, and SEFFY also covered the cost of taking the L test. In addition, the program offered some funds for youth to get their Novice licence. The idea was that having a driver’s license can help to reduce barriers to finding and keeping a job.

The program offered psycho-vocational testing to some youth. The assessments helped to determine if youth had any disabilities; how youth’s disabilities might impact their experience with vocational training and employment; and helped to identify jobs or careers that could be a good fit for each youth given their challenges, interests, and strengths.

**Comments from staff and stakeholders…**

“SEFFY offers education funding and support workers who help youth navigate the education system and address barriers.”

“SEFFY offers youth in and from care the education supports they need.”

“The program helps youth with their education, wherever they’re at.”
PROGRAM STRENGTHS & CHALLENGES

Evaluation participants identified strengths and challenges associated with SEFFY. Many of the strengths were consistent with the lessons they had learned about how to best support youth in and from care with their education.

Strengths

Stakeholders felt that SEFFY staff knew how to engage program participants; were reliable and conscientious; and were dedicated to helping youth pursue their education and succeed at school. Aunt Leah’s staff working in other programs also expressed gratitude and admiration toward SEFFY staff.

Low-barrier

External stakeholders described SEFFY as very accessible, low-barrier, and accommodating to young people. Stakeholders felt the program was flexible not only in meeting youth where they were at, but also in not imposing age restrictions. They valued that the program offered support to youth who had aged out of care, and that SEFFY was available to support young people with their education whenever they were ready.

Supports for youth transitioning out of care

Aunt Leah’s staff felt that the training opportunities which SEFFY offered to youth aged 19 and older were invaluable because these youth would have difficulty accessing such training without the program’s support, and the training helped to improve their skills and bolster their résumé. Stakeholders felt that more of these supports should be available in the community for youth aging out of care, to ease their transition to adulthood and to narrow the gap in services that exists.

Individualized

Evaluation participants explained that SEFFY staff adapted the learning and supports they offered in order to meet each youth’s individual needs. They regarded this as a strength of the program and highlighted the importance of flexibility and tailoring education supports to each youth’s needs and learning style.

Holistic approach

Youth, Aunt Leah’s staff, and external stakeholders said the wide range of supports which SEFFY offered to program participants—including housing (e.g., rental subsidy), transportation (transit pass), emotional support, and access to food—helped youth to meet their basic needs and contributed to their readiness and ability to pursue their education goals. Staff and external stakeholders highlighted the importance of education programs taking a holistic approach by addressing all of a young person’s needs, rather than focusing only on education and employment.

Integrated internal supports coupled with external partnerships

Some stakeholders said that offering a variety of supports and services out of one building within Aunt Leah’s was a good model because it enabled different Aunt Leah’s programs to work together to support each young person’s range of needs.
They also said that when education support was offered in a location where youth already felt comfortable and safe (e.g., where youth already accessed other supports), it can help to increase their likelihood of staying engaged with the education support.

Another program strength was that SEFFY staff were well-connected to a range of supports outside Aunt Leah’s to which they could connect youth to pursue their education and employment goals if needed.

Supporting autonomy

Evaluation participants said that SEFFY supported youth in and from care to develop autonomy, which they felt was critical for young people’s successful transition to adulthood. Development of autonomy included teaching program participants the skills they needed to ultimately access resources on their own, and supporting them to learn how to seek knowledge and advocate for themselves. (One youth described it as “training of self-responsibility”.)

Trusting relationships

Youth described the support they received from staff as “relieving” because it helped to reduce their school-related barriers and stress. They valued the relationship they had with program staff and felt that staff took the time to understand them and nurture them. Youth said that SEFFY staff in some ways took on the role of a parent because of the all-around support they offered to program participants. For example, one participant recounted that staff drove them to school if they needed a ride, and gave them the emotional support they needed to succeed.

Evaluation participants identified relationship-building with youth as a strength of the program. Aunt Leah’s staff said that developing a trusting relationship with program participants, and being attuned to their needs, was key to success. Youth also valued that SEFFY staff stayed connected and checked in with program participants even after they finished their school program or vocational training. Youth expressed great appreciation for SEFFY staff’s faith in them and staff’s commitment to helping them succeed.

“Continue to support me all around in life and continue to ‘check in’ with me even if I'm not around because that style of caring motivates me knowing people care about how & what I'm doing.”

–Program participant

Celebrating successes

Participants said they valued the emotional support they received from staff both during stressful times as well as during times of celebration, such as when they successfully completed a training course.

Aunt Leah’s staff explained that the program hosted celebrations for participants to mark their achievements—both large achievements such as graduating from a school program, as well as smaller ones along the way. Staff felt that these celebrations helped youth to feel proud and empowered, and helped motivate them to persevere with their education and employment pursuits.
Program participants’ comments

"[SEFFY staff] will help you if you want to pursue something."

"[SEFFY staff] always makes sure we’re succeeding."

"SEFFY staff are doing an amazing job."

"Staff are helpful and super nice."

"Program staff are awesome and super helpful."

"Staff know a lot about a lot."

"They offer me immediate support when I need it."

External stakeholders’ comments

“It’s very valuable to have that support through SEFFY.”

“Even when [SEFFY staff are] away, they make sure they’ve taken care of things [for the youth].”

“SEFFY works hard to make supports accessible to the youth.”

“[SEFFY staff are] flexible and accommodating.”

“Aunt Leah’s provides a safe community space.”

“Aunt Leah’s has an incredible staff team, amazing group of people.”

“Aunt Leah’s creates a safe space for youth in and from care, and staff clearly care.”

“I have had nothing but positive experiences reaching out to [program staff].”

“[SEFFY staff] is great!”

“We want more of [SEFFY staff].”
**Challenges**

Aunt Leah’s staff and stakeholders identified under-staffing as a major program challenge. They felt that having too few staff to run the program (1.5 staff members) led to staff being over-stretched and over-worked. Also, the full-time staff member regularly had to train new part-time staff, because the latter would often move on to new positions. This situation further increased the workload of the full-time staff.

Moreover, insufficient staffing led to many youth not receiving the one-on-one education support they needed. Staff explained that many of the youth needed individualized support to learn basic skills which would help them develop “education maturity” and succeed at school. This need tended to be greatest among young people who had been disengaged from school for some time and struggled to complete high school.

Another challenge was that funds available to youth through SEFFY (e.g., bursaries) were limited, which resulted in SEFFY staff needing to access funds and resources through program partners or other agencies, or in youth needing to directly apply for external funds.

A few stakeholders who facilitated education or employment workshops at Aunt Leah’s said that youth attendance was low, and that sometimes there were more staff than youth in attendance. Stakeholders explained that it was difficult to motivate youth to attend an optional workshop, facilitated by an outside person (as opposed to Aunt Leah’s staff) whom the youth had not developed a trusting relationship with.

Aunt Leah’s staff explained that youth in and from care have many challenges, including with mental health. These challenges can lead to reduced motivation and loss of momentum when it comes to pursuing their education, and it can be difficult for staff to keep youth engaged in working toward their education goals. Staff identified the importance of being accommodating, flexible and understanding of youth’s circumstances, but that it was also important to support them to move forward and to persevere. They felt these two facets were sometimes difficult to balance. This situation also highlighted to them the importance of offering youth support in areas beyond education, including mental health.

Another challenge was that many youth in and from care struggled with basic life-skills, which created barriers for them to pursue their schooling and experience educational success. For example, they might miss meetings at school due to challenges with time-management, or might not have the study skills which are needed to do well on tests. This situation underscored to staff the importance of supporting youth to learn basic skills, which they acknowledged was a gradual process rather than achieved through one-off workshops.

Finally, staff pointed out that program participants tended to not have family who could help them navigate the education system, and SEFFY stepped in to fill that role. For example, program staff have met with officials at a youth’s school to ensure the youth did not lose their funding, and have also accompanied youth to job sites to offer them emotional support while trying to secure employment. Staff commented, “It’s a big role for this little program to be fulfilling.”
Some lessons learned from Aunt Leah’s staff and external stakeholders…

“Building relationships is key to everything.”

“It’s important to understand each youth’s background, as much as they are willing to share with us.”

“Education needs to be accessible, flexible, and welcoming.”

“The more the various supports and services work together and collaborate, and the more we connect youth to those supports, the better it is for the youth.”

“Kids from care are falling through the cracks [when they age out at 19] and need more supports.”

“You can’t be successful in school unless you have a stable place to live, education goals, and a support network.”

“Generally speaking, I find that youth from care have been through a very disempowering system being in government care…I believe that supporting youth to push for autonomy through knowledge seeking, self-advocacy, and reflexivity is the best way to support them with their education.”
PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Some stakeholders said they did not have enough experience with SEFFY to talk about its outcomes, or did not follow-up with the youth they had referred to know the extent to which the program had supported them with their education. However, other stakeholders—as well as youth and Aunt Leah’s staff—identified program outcomes which are outlined in this section.

Greater Knowledge

Youth focus group participants identified gaining knowledge about different aspects of the education system because of their involvement with SEFFY, including how to apply to post-secondary and how to apply for funding. Some also learned about the tuition waiver program, which paid for their tuition as well as medical and dental benefits.

Aunt Leah’s staff noted that SEFFY participants developed greater knowledge and competence in navigating the education system to meet their goals. Staff said this knowledge and sense of competence helped to ground youth and to reduce their self-doubt.

Aunt Leah’s staff also identified greater knowledge among themselves because of their involvement with SEFFY. They explained that SEFFY staff informed them about the education system and support for youth in and from care, and enhanced their knowledge of AYAs, the provincial tuition waiver program, and accessing other funding. Aunt Leah’s staff said that their greater understanding enabled them to talk with youth about education supports in a more informed way. Staff added that they were continually learning more about the education system alongside the youth they worked with.

Academic & Employment Success

Focus group participants explained that the support and funding they received through the program enabled them to enroll in school and to succeed. For example, some said that the tutoring they received through SEFFY helped them to improve their writing skills. Also, one youth said the financial support they received through the program enabled them to move from a shared space to their own accommodation, which helped to create a quiet space for them to study. Staff also discussed the importance of housing stability among program participants, as it enabled them to focus on their education, which increased their likelihood of succeeding.

Some stakeholders said that youth had accessed tutoring through SEFFY and were able to earn school credit to complete high school as a result. These stakeholders said the youth had expressed to them how grateful they were for the support they received through SEFFY and how much it impacted their life.

Aunt Leah’s staff also reported that youth’s involvement in SEFFY helped to support their academic and employment success. Staff said that some youth, including young mothers, had returned to school and found a job because of the support they had received through SEFFY. Other youth successfully completed high school and/or pursued post-secondary education due to their involvement with SEFFY. Aunt Leah’s staff said that youth’s education success helped them become successful with securing employment, which led to greater independence and less reliance on Income Assistance.

Most survey respondents indicated that their involvement in SEFFY helped to improve their motivation to reach their education goals; their chance of succeeding at school; their access to needed school supports; and their education planning.
The more times they had accessed supports through SEFFY, the more likely they were to report positive education outcomes (with the exception of improved grades). For example, youth who had accessed SEFFY supports 16 or more times were more likely than those who had accessed program supports 2–5 times to report improved education planning (91% vs. 52%), a greater likelihood of succeeding at school (100% vs. 59%), and improved motivation to reach their education goals (100% vs. 60%).

There were no gender differences, with the exception that females were more likely than males to report a greater chance of succeeding at school because of their involvement with SEFFY.

**Independent-Living Skills**

Youth focus group participants said the program helped them become more independent and taught them about taking responsibility. For example, they gained skills to access school-related information on their own, and developed more confidence in their ability to support themselves. Youth felt the program supported them in gaining the skills they needed to ultimately live independently.

**Emotional Well-Being**

Staff noticed improved self-confidence and sense of pride among program participants. For example, they recounted that a youth who recently earned their forklift operator license expressed pride in their accomplishments. Participants also came to recognize what they were capable of achieving, and realized they had options beyond living on Income Assistance.
Youth’s comments…

“Without SEFFY I wouldn’t be in school right now.”
“The program helps us learn how we can help ourselves.”
“I can do anything on my own now.”
“The SEFFY program teaches you responsibility.
“SEFFY helps with “life-ing.”

Aunt Leah staff’s comments…

“Youth’s education success contributes to employment success.”
“Whenever a youth accesses [education supports], I learn at the same time.”

Outcomes Measured by the Youth Catalyst Fund

Responses to a question distributed by SEFFY’s funder indicated that most youth who had accessed SEFFY more than once felt the program had helped them to make a plan and to feel supported. Around half felt that SEFFY had helped them to write a résumé as well as to connect to their community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>This program has helped me… (among those who had accessed SEFFY more than once)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make a plan</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel supported</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do a résumé</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connect to the community</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cope</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply for a job I like</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply to post-secondary</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay on track to graduate</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn interview skills</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet employers</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have better relationships with peers</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get homework done</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have better relationships with teachers</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. Youth could mark all that applied.
This question was part of the survey distributed by Community Foundations of Canada’s Youth Catalyst Fund.

Also, the more times that participants had connected to SEFFY, the more likely they were to have future goals, know where to get the help they needed, feel they had the support they needed, and feel good about themselves. There were no differences in scores based on youth’s gender identity.
How youth’s involvement in SEFFY affected their lives (survey responses)...

“Helped me set my education goals!”

“Motivation and support to go back to school and graduate. Able to do full time studies for the first time.”

“It’s given me the motivation to carry on with my education and not give up on life.”

“I have someone I can turn to when I feel like going crazy or when I feel like nobody cares.”

“Made me feel more motivated.”

“My involvement in SEFFY has helped me gain confidence in my ability to either go back to school or find alternative education.”

“These are people who I enjoy working with, who understand my needs and try to help me achieve my goals and hope to see me succeed.”

“I was able to complete my grade 12.”

“Upgrading high school.”

“It made it easy to afford college.”

“Helped me towards graduating college.”

“It’s helped me apply for school and take some financial stress away.”

“It’s helped me better my life, they helped with funds.”

“Paying fees was a burden on me. SEFFY helped me pay my college fees.”

“It helped a lot having someone guide me and help me with homework struggles.”

“It gave me a positive perspective on post-secondary education and the benefits.”

“It has helped me to connect to different supports, including AYA contacts, and financial supports.”

“They helped me a lot when I first aged out and had no idea what to do.”

“It has helped me gain confidence in my efforts if landing a job, and sticking to it.”

“I learned legal rights about my job position and acquired new jobs after SEFFY helped me obtain my security license. SEFFY also gave me the confidence to apply myself in all aspects of my life!”

“I have never in my life stayed at a job for more than a year, and now here I am 3 years into my job and still going!”
EVALUATION PARTICIPANTS’ SUGGESTIONS

When asked if they had any suggestions for the SEFFY program, some evaluation participants indicated they had none because they were satisfied with how the program was currently operating. Also, some stakeholders felt they did not know enough about the program to offer suggestions. Other evaluation participants shared the following suggestions:

- More program staff are needed to better meet the needs of participants. This was the most common suggestion among all evaluation participants.

- More program funding is needed to offer participants the bursaries and other financial supports required to reduce barriers to attending school and experiencing education success. For example, it would be helpful if program participants could receive housing subsidies through SEFFY on a longer-term basis because housing stability is key to supporting youth to succeed at school. Also, more funding for youth to obtain a driver’s license was a suggestion raised by youth participants.

- A common suggestion from youth was that the program should offer regular (e.g., monthly) one-on-one check-ins with participants to better address individual needs. These meetings could support participants in developing skills, such as with scheduling, time-management, budgeting, course planning, conflict resolution (e.g., with other students or co-workers), and meeting their goals.

- Engaging more tutors or tutoring agencies would increase the individualized learning supports available to program participants.

- There should be regular weekly programming at SEFFY to offer more structure and supports to program participants. For example, there could be sessions which teach study skills and offer studying tips and strategies.

- SEFFY could be more closely connected to Essential Skills training because many program participants would benefit from gaining basic life skills which would help them succeed at school. Staff felt that learning these skills was an ongoing process, rarely achieved through one workshop, and therefore youth needed continuous supports to learn these skills.

- It would be beneficial for program participants to have more opportunities to sit in on classes at post-secondary institutions before they apply to any program. This experience could help them feel less intimidated about the prospect of attending post-secondary and perhaps more inclined to follow through with the application.

- Some youth felt it could be beneficial to get more information through SEFFY about different school programs that are available which could help them reach their employment or career goals. For example, representatives from post-secondary institutions could visit Aunt Leah’s more frequently to talk with SEFFY participants about the different programs that each institution offers.

- A comment was that some youth found the SEFFY acronym confusing, and a suggestion was to refer to the program as “education support” or “support from an education worker” which would make it easier for youth to understand what the program offered and would encourage more young people to access its supports.

- Some Aunt Leah’s staff felt it could be beneficial for them to be reminded of the referral process (i.e., how staff from other ALP programs should refer their program participants to SEFFY).
Other Suggestions (e.g., if more staff and funding were available)

- The program should extend its reach to more young people in and from care, and more should be done to increase people’s awareness of the program. For example, staff could regularly share information about SEFFY at schools, MCFD team meetings, and community agencies.

- The program could host a mini school to offer youth in and from care the intensive learning support they needed to successfully navigate the school system and complete their schooling.

- A dedicated, youth-friendly space for the SEFFY program would be ideal. This space could be an education and study room, with school-related informational posters on the walls, and school program brochures available to program participants.

- More vocational testing, coupled with career counselling, could be offered through SEFFY to help identify youth’s interests and skills, and which careers might be an appropriate fit for them. This information can help to guide youth’s decisions about which school programs they want to pursue, and could increase their likelihood of academic success if the program they choose meshes with their needs and career goals.

- It could be helpful for SEFFY to have partnerships with local businesses so that participants can try different jobs to see which might be a good fit for them. This experience could help them “visualize their possibilities” and might help them narrow down the options for which education program they should pursue.

- A suggestion from youth was that the program could offer outreach support to young people. For example, if youth have social anxiety and are apprehensive about accessing education supports at Aunt Leah’s, staff could visit youth in their home to provide this support.

- If circumstances permitted, it would be ideal if SEFFY staff were part of each youth’s Integrated Case Management (ICM) team and were involved from the outset. This way, youth would be connected to education supports before they transitioned out of care, rather than many hearing about SEFFY for the first time only after they aged out.

Broader Recommendations (beyond SEFFY)

Evaluation participants also offered broader recommendations to best support youth in and from care with their education:

- **More financial support** is needed for youth in and from care, not only to support them with applying for school and registering for classes, but also to meet their basic needs. This would include housing-related funding so that youth can maintain their housing and experience stability, which would help them pursue their education. It is important for adult supports to help youth explore the funding available, so they can see education as a possibility for them.

- Community agencies should have better partnerships with the school system, and there should be more communication among different schools and school districts, to support youth when they move from one high school to another, as is often the case among youth in care.

- Moreover, **systemic change** needs to take place. The decision to move children and youth from one placement to another, and often from one school district to another, needs to be re-examined in light of the research indicating that increased moves is associated with a lower likelihood of pursuing post-secondary education among youth from care.
Youth in and from care should have a **navigator** or liaison worker starting in high school or middle school. The navigator should continue to offer young people school-related support beyond high school, throughout the time youth wish to pursue their education (e.g., help with applying for programs, registering for classes, accessing bursaries). Youth felt that a navigator/support worker should also be available to help them create structure and routine in their lives, including help with scheduling their various commitments and activities (e.g., school, homework, grocery shopping, other activities). This worker could have a weekly check-in with each youth to help them create a plan for completing their school work and accomplishing their weekly tasks and goals. Another idea was to receive a wake-up call each morning from the worker, which would encourage youth to attend their classes.

It is important to support youth in learning **life-skills** well before they turn 19, as well as to offer life-skills support after they age out of care. Youth should be supported with skills development on an ongoing basis over time (if needed).

**Academic advising** should be part of youth’s care-planning process, and should be offered to them before they enter post-secondary (e.g., while they are still in high school). Many youth from care do not consider pursuing post-secondary education, so it can be helpful for an advisor to connect with them before they transition out of care, so they develop the mindset that post-secondary education might be an option for them, particularly with the provincial tuition waiver program.

**Psycho-educational and vocational assessments** should be available to youth in and from care starting when they are still in high school, and should be free of charge (e.g., subsidized by the government).

Youth should receive support to think about employability starting in high school, and should have access to **job skills training** (e.g., learning trades-related skills) at that time. This exposure could help them gain a better understanding of their interests and strengths, and give them a sense of what career, and career program, they are interested in pursuing after high school.

Some stakeholders felt that youth from care should be steered to **public** rather than **private** schools because public schools offer many of the same programs as private schools but are more affordable. However, other evaluation participants felt that many private schools offer more flexibility (e.g., in terms of when youth can enroll) and offer some specialized programs which youth from care can benefit from. Some evaluation participants concluded that it is important to assess each situation on a case-by-case basis.
SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

This evaluation canvassed program participants, Aunt Leah’s staff, and external stakeholders for their feedback on the SEFFY program. Evaluation participants were also asked about systemic education-related barriers and policy changes, as well as lessons learned and recommendations to best support youth in and from care with their education.

Program participants identified barriers that youth in and from care often experience to graduating from high school, including lack of financial and emotional support, and adults not expecting them to succeed at school. Mental health challenges were the most commonly identified barrier to pursuing post-secondary education. Evaluation participants shared feedback on how the SEFFY program addresses barriers and how it supports young people to achieve their education and employment goals.

Youth participants expressed appreciation for the range of supports they received through SEFFY, including emotional support and encouragement to persevere with their education. Over half of survey respondents felt that Aunt Leah’s staff expected them to do well at school, and some focus group participants described feeling motivated to achieve their goals knowing that staff cared about their progress.

Similarly, most survey respondents reported increased motivation to reach their academic goals, as well as better education planning and a greater chance of succeeding at school because of the support they received through SEFFY. The more times they had accessed supports through SEFFY, the more likely they were to report these positive outcomes.

Findings also suggested that program participants gained greater knowledge of how to navigate the education system and access funding. Further, SEFFY supported participants, including young parents, to complete high school; undertake short-term training and certification programs; pursue post-secondary education; access a tuition waiver and other education funding; and/or secure a job.

Evaluation participants identified a number of program strengths, including SEFFY’s emphasis on developing trusting relationships with participants; the holistic, individualized, and low-barrier approach; and the dedicated staff. Many of the strengths were consistent with the lessons that staff and stakeholders had learned about how to best support youth in and from care with their education.

Under-staffing was seen as a major program challenge, as was limited funds. Evaluation participants suggested that more staff and program funding were needed to provide youth with the supports necessary to experience education success. They also offered other program suggestions, as well as broader recommendations (beyond SEFFY) to best support youth in and from care with their education.

The mixed-methods evaluation approach enabled the integration of quantitative survey data with more in-depth qualitative information. Findings in this report suggest that the SEFFY program is meeting its objectives of helping participants reach their education goals.

As agreed at the outset of this evaluation, McCreary and Aunt Leah’s staff will meet in February, 2019 to discuss the evaluation findings and how SEFFY evaluation activities might be sustained within the program moving forward. McCreary can make modifications to the participant survey, if requested to do so by Aunt Leah’s, to enhance its meaningfulness and usefulness within the program in the future.