

Flexible Upskilling Network (FUN) Skills Catalyst Program

Introduction



The Flexible Upskilling Network (FUN) program is a blended learning program where participants receive opportunities to combine valuable work experience with accelerated skills training. The objective is to support youth who face employment barriers by helping them develop soft skills such as communication, collaboration and problem solving.

Challenge

Key Focus of FUN Program

Unemployed

Visible Minorities

Not in Education

Not in Training

This project will focus on people, especially youth from visible minority groups who are involuntary not in employment, education or training (NEET). That includes, youth from black communities, and women.

Challenges

Changing Workplace due to COVID-19

Availability of jobs & resources

Disrupted delivery of training & workshops

Employer Engagement

Our team was able to switch easily to full remote delivery for training and workshops via digital platforms. We also transitioned to a remote work team, which we were also well positioned to undertake. Another challenge we faced was employer engagement due to COVID-19, however we have been able to overcome this challenge by leaning on our partners to find additional suitable employers.

Approach

The experiential learning approach is innovative since it provides youth with an opportunity to solve real-world business challenges while using Prepr's signature PIE tool that addresses three essential skills gaps facing the business services sector today: expertise in innovation, business development (entrepreneurship/sales/commercialization) and project management.

Key Project Partners



Network for the Advancement of Black Communities

Provided support via **participant recruitment** and helping us to reach a more diverse group of participants.



THE LINUX FOUNDATION

Provided an **instructor to support participants** in gaining in-demand skills, in addition to providing participants with access to courses and certification exams to help them further their digital skills.



MAGNET

Provided **access to their ALIGN portal** and assessments, which were leveraged by our participants during the program. In addition, Magnet supported by helping to **find suitable employers**.

Outcome



49.3% of participants were women.



35 Employers
We engaged 35 employers to date and are actively reaching out for stronger employment outcomes.



71.8%
Our first cohort of graduates achieved a 71.8% completion rate with the Prepr approach.



21.1%
A fifth of our graduates were youth from Black communities.

We have received overwhelmingly positive responses from participants and employers, and we are eager to continue with subsequent cohorts.

From an operations perspective, COVID-19 has acted as an accelerator for innovation to delivering effective distance work-integrated learning (WIL) placements. The Prepr approach is a state-of-the-art platform for the delivery of skills training and experiential learning. The FUN Skills Catalyst program has adapted accordingly in order to become more resilient and mitigate disruptive change. This illustrates Prepr's resolve to re-evaluate the value proposition of skills training and emerge even stronger beyond the crisis.

Next Steps

Provide additional learning modules focused on hands-on demonstrations.

Provide additional structure and tools for remote collaboration.

Bring the program to scale, reaching a higher number of participants.

Success will be defined as achieving 80% youth certification (144 youth), 50% youth job placements (90 youth) and 85% self-reported gains in upskilling by youth. Related to the employer participation through the workshop and participant matching success will be defined as having 90+% of employers report a willingness to hire youth from the group, namely women or youth from black communities. Further, having employers report seeing program participants as a strong potential pipeline for new talent with the necessary digital and soft skills they need.