



Transformation through Participation

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Outline

1. Theoretical and Research Approaches
2. Project Logic Model
3. Partners
4. Engagement Activities
5. Program Evaluation
6. Findings
7. Discussion/Implication



Theoretical and Research Approaches

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2000)

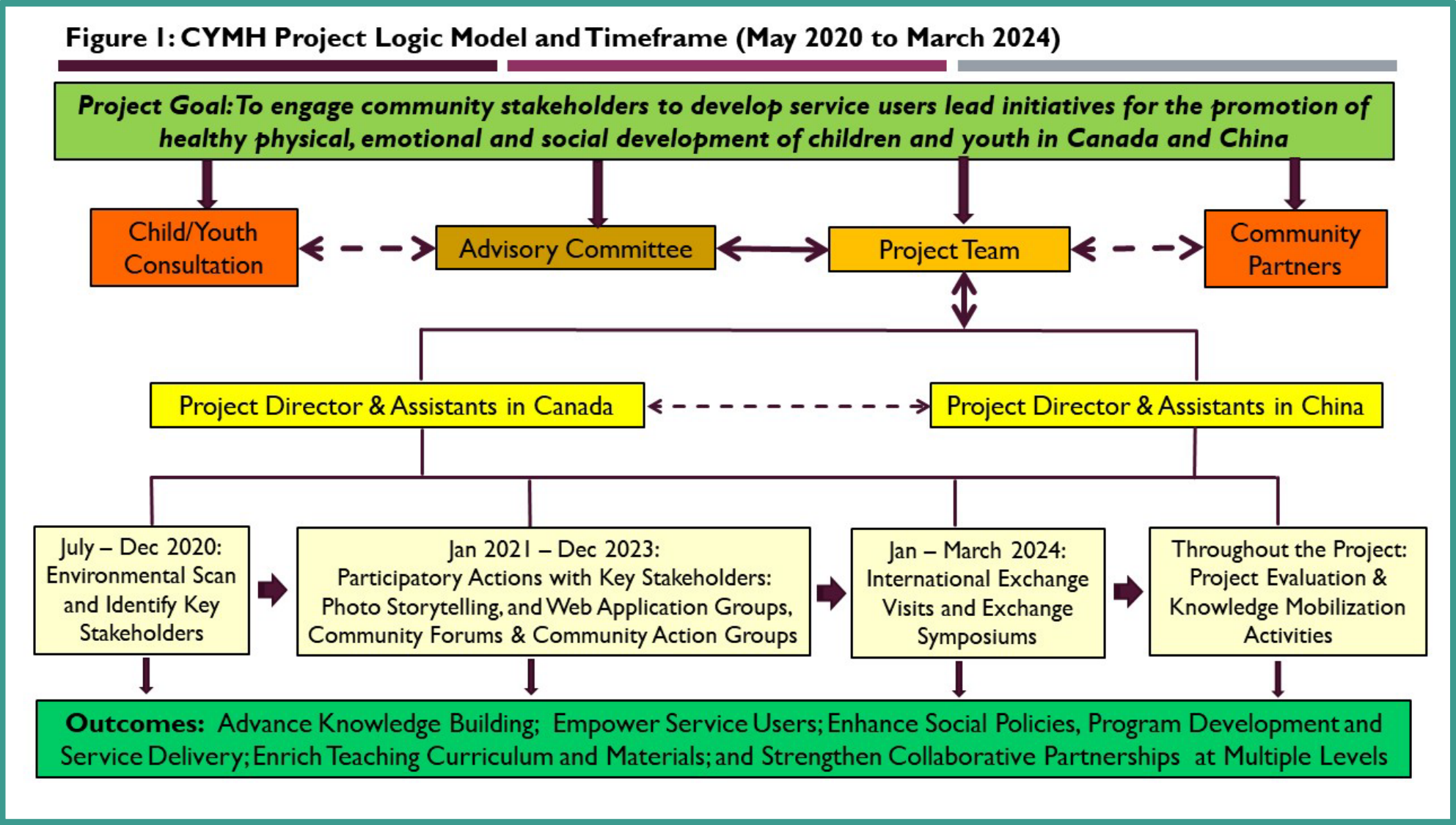
- Individuals have intrinsic motivation to set goals and have interests, and are able to self-regulate and develop skills with adequate external motivation such as encouragement and recognition

Participatory Action Research (PAR) (Bozlak & Kelley, 2015; Schneider, 2012)

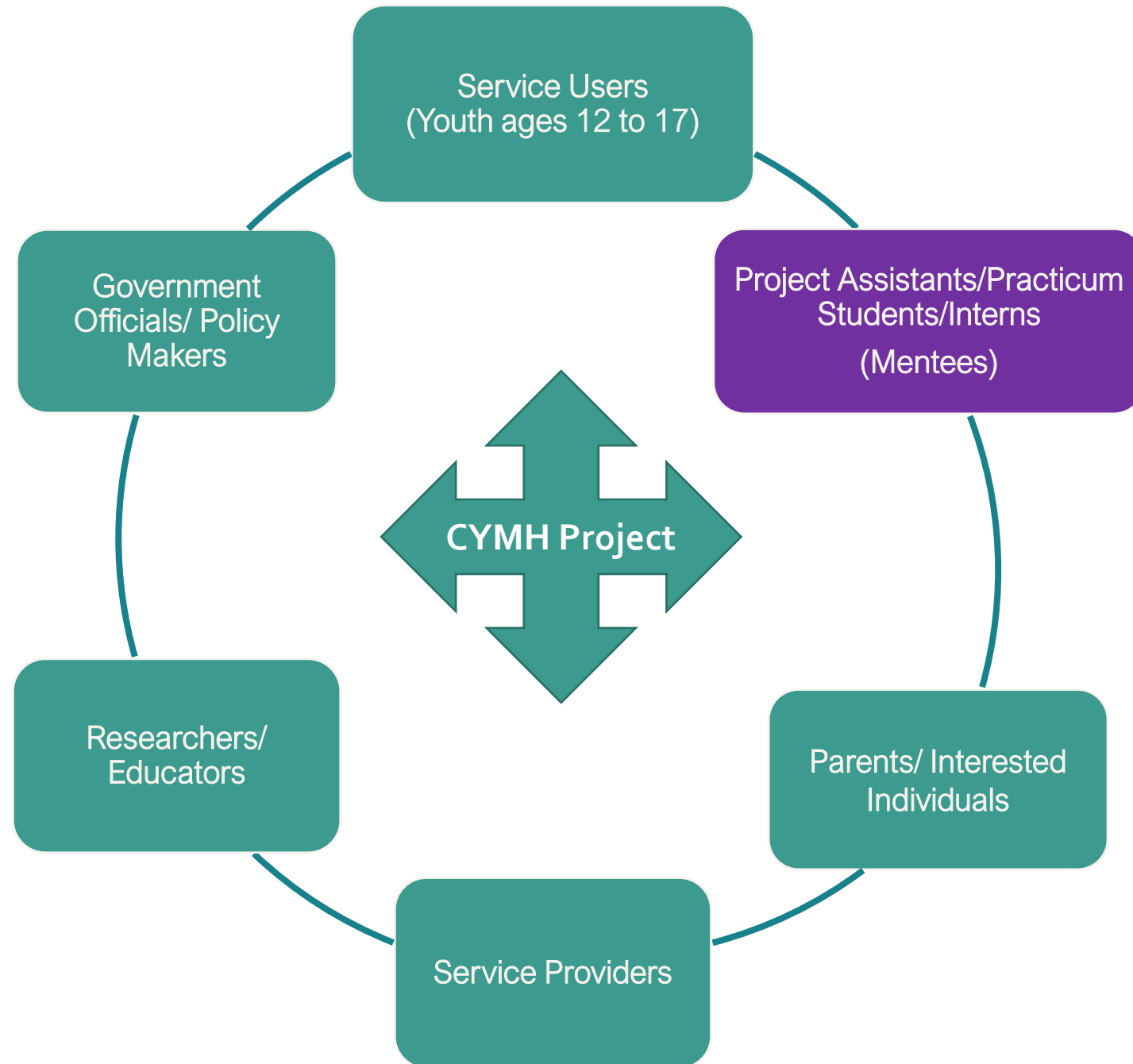
- Not only a research approach, but also a methodology that is user-led enabling the co-creation of knowledge to promote change through engagement & collaboration
- **“involving youth in iterative manner...whereby youth gain more voice, choice, and power with each iteration”** (Bozlak & Kelley, 2015, p.72)

Project Logic Model

Figure 1: CYMH Project Logic Model and Timeframe (May 2020 to March 2024)

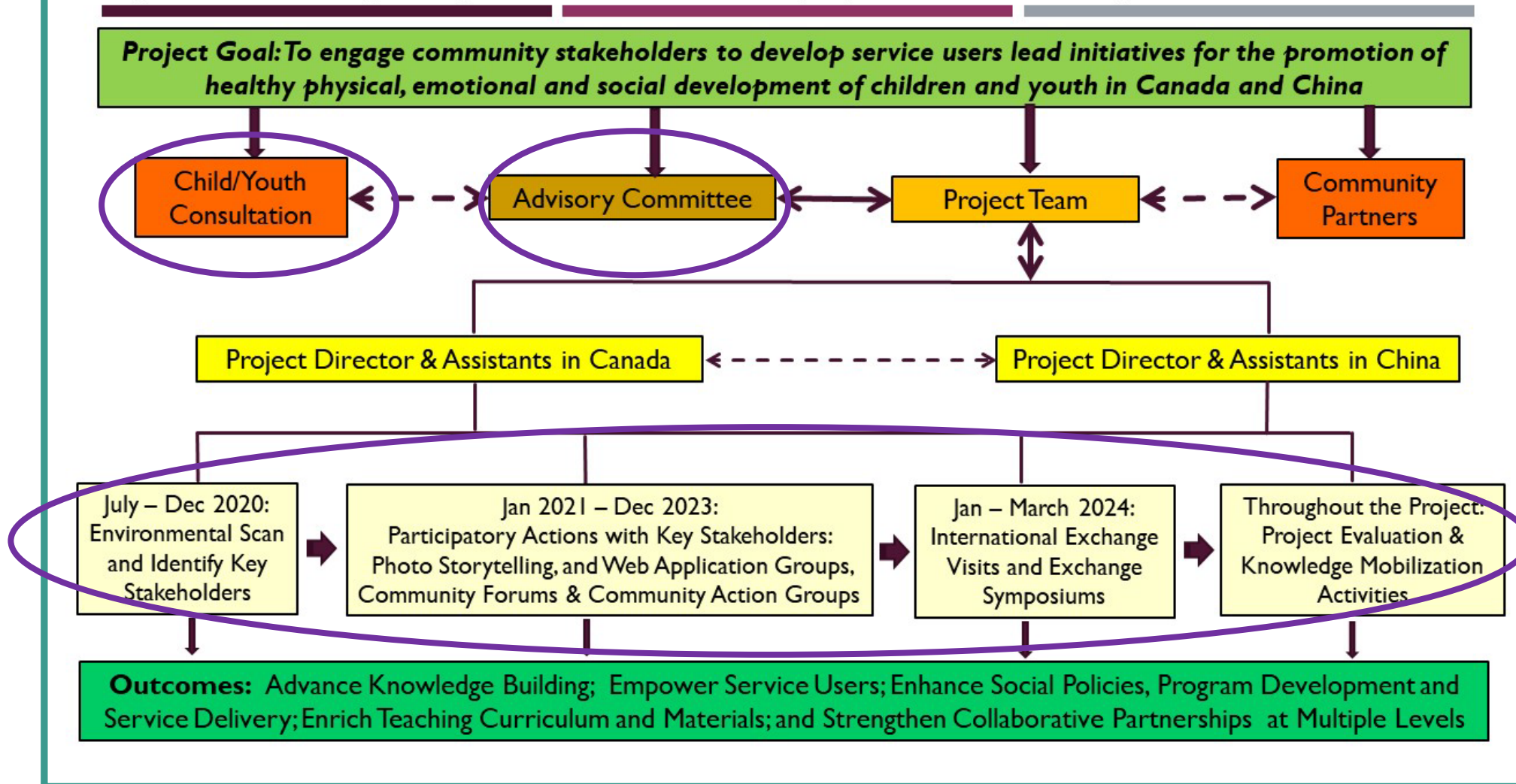


Partners

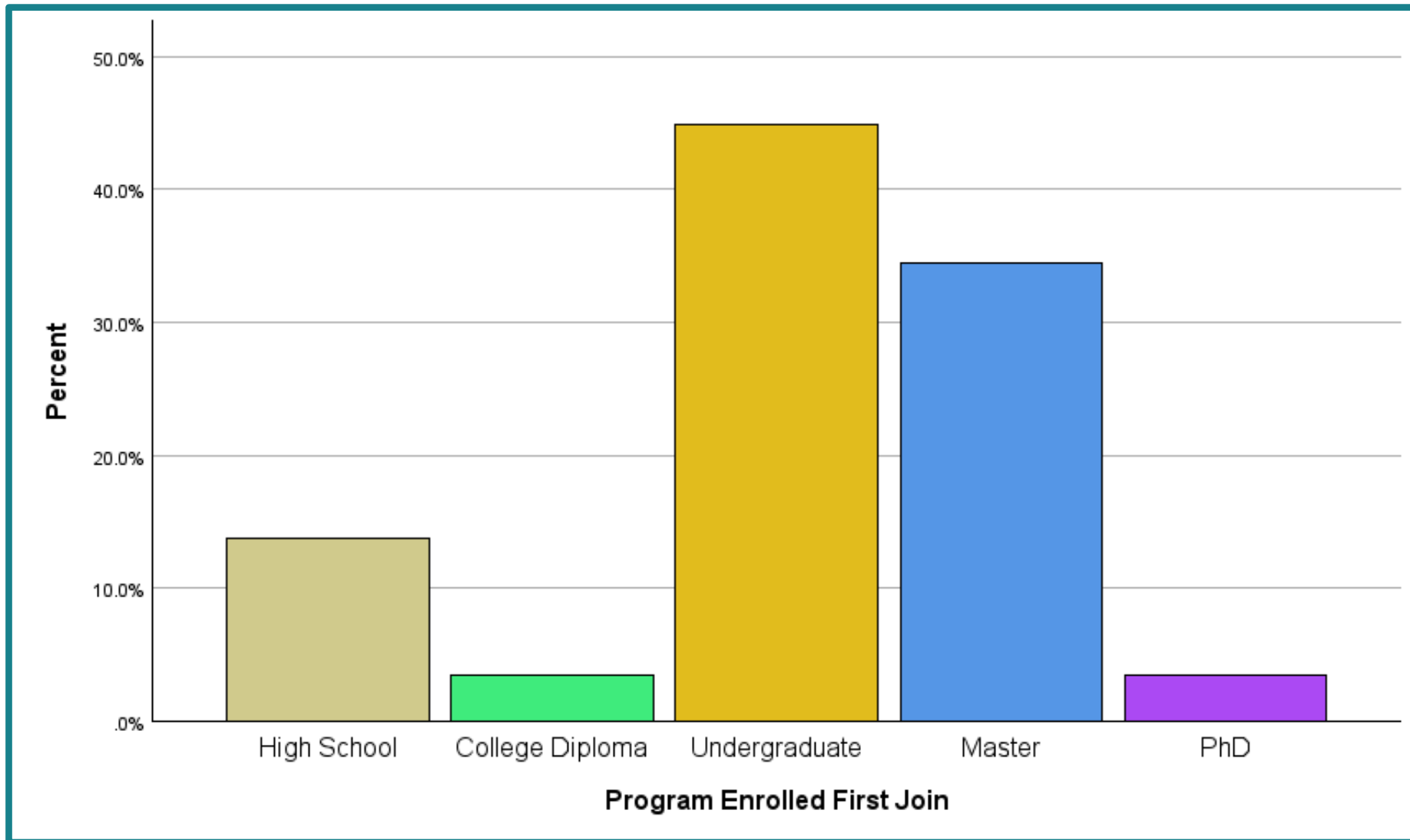


Overview on the Engagement Activities

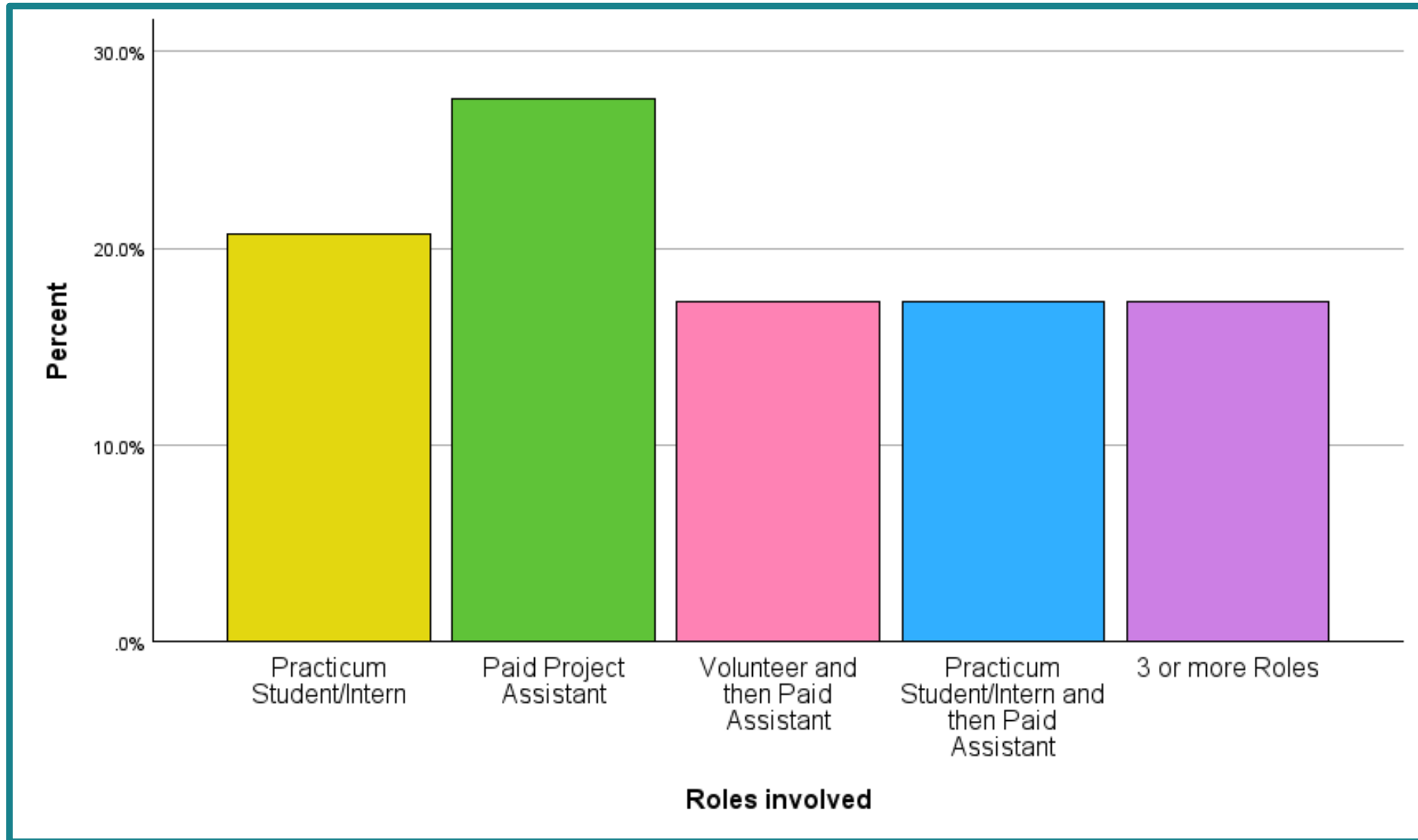
Figure 1: CYMH Project Logic Model and Timeframe (May 2020 to March 2024)



Demographics of the Mentees ($n=29$)



Roles Involved throughout the Project



Mentorship Support Provided

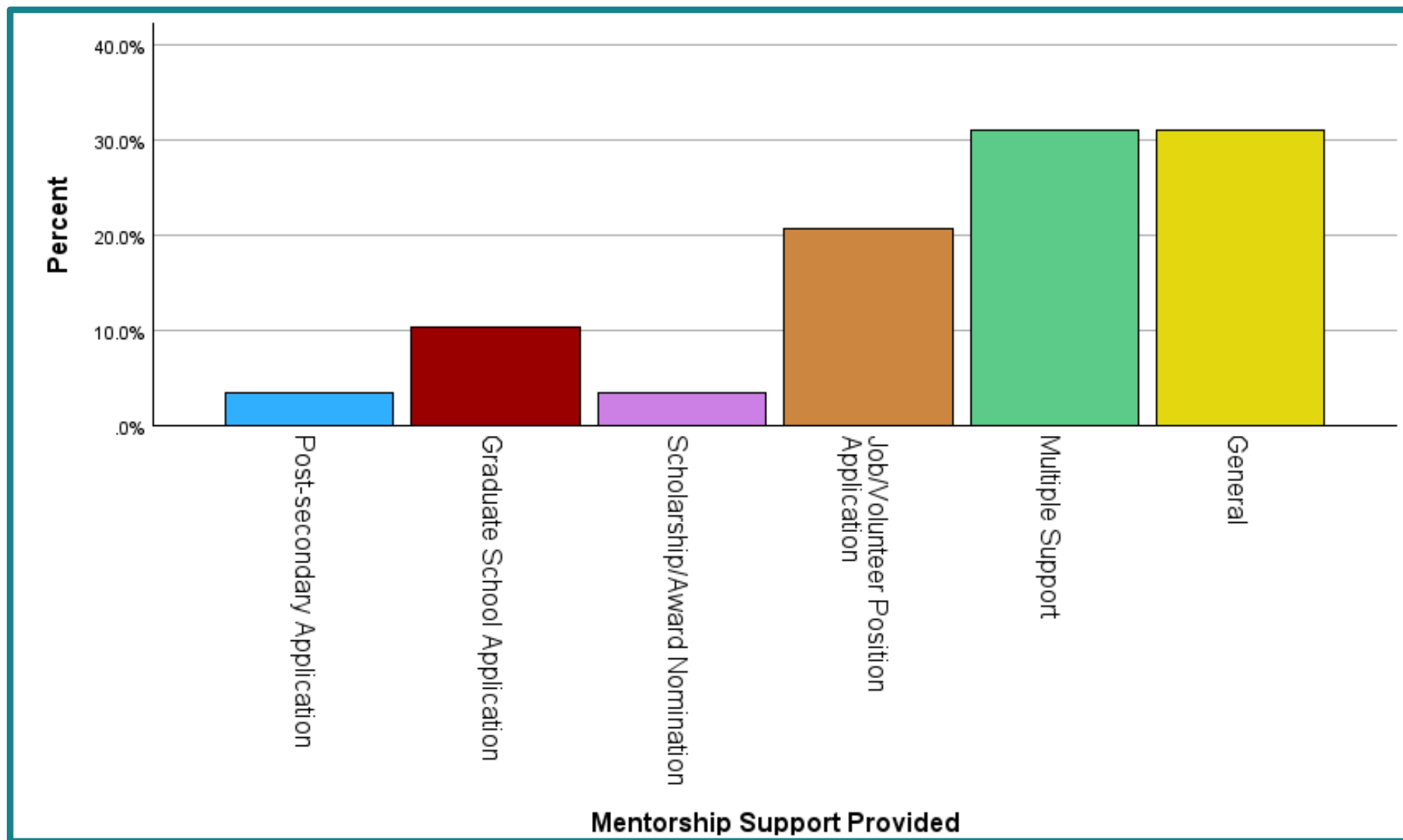


Figure 1: Details of the Engagement Activities in the 3-year Project Period (n=29)

Figure 1: CYMH Project Engagement Activities

Keys: **Roles:** 1-Volunteer, 2-Practicum Student/Intern, 3-Paid Project Assistant, 4-Leading Role as Coordinator, Co-Organizer, Co-Chair in Sub-group or Moderator in Community Event.

Mentee	Roles	Advisory Committee	Service Inventories	Lit Review/ Market Analysis	Photo Story Group	Web App Group/ App Development	Community Forum	International Symposium	Knowledge Mobilization
M01	1, 2, 3 & 4								
M02	1, 2, 3 & 4								
M03	2 & 3								
M04	2 & 3								
M05	2								
M06	3								
M07	3								
M08	2								
M09	2								
M10	3								
M11	2								
M12	2								
M13	3								
M14	3								
M15	3								
M16	3								
M19	3 & 4								
M18	2, 3, & 4								
M19	2 & 3								
M20	1 & 3								
M21	1 & 3								
M22	2 & 3								
M23	2 & 3								
M24	2 & 3								
M25	1, 2, 3 & 4								
M26	2								
M27	1 & 3								
M28	3								
M29	1 & 3								

Program Evaluation

Mid-Project and Exit survey were conducted (Grinnell et al., 2019)

- What role(s) and activities you were involved with the CYMH Project?
- What was your experience with the CYMH Project?
- Any memorable experience you would like to share?
- Would you recommend this project to other people who are seeking as a practicum placement/internship or a project assistant position?

Findings

Six main themes were identified from the feedback by the mentees:

1. Supported academic advancement
2. Assisted career development
3. Advanced knowledge/skills to improve youth mental health
4. Strengthened social capital
5. Inspired the pursue of personal goals
6. Developed self-efficacy

Supported academic advancement

“...my time on the project offered me valuable learning experiences, as well as insights. It was instrumental in my own personal growth and was *a significant factor in my decision to pursue graduate studies*.

Furthermore, my time on the project served to highlight to me my areas of passion, including that of macro social work, research, social justice advocacy, and further engagement in academia.” (M13)

“I learned more than I thought I would and I now have a much better understanding of research and its role in social work. I feel *more confident about going the PhD* and research route in the future thanks to this experience.” (M09)

Assisted career development

“...But by involving in project activities, reflective practice, the effective use of supervision, and engaging in meaningful discussions about my biases with my supervisor, I was able to put aside those biases and personal beliefs. I could switch to a strength and empowerment-based approach...This project *empowered me to engage in more research activities and advocacy work for the mental health and well-being of Children and Youth.*” (M11)

“While I learned many things to carry on in my career as a social worker, the highlight of my experience was the people. Even working online during COVID-19, I was able to have meaningful human connections through my professional relationships with CYMH team members. They were supportive and friendly while challenging me to grow as a social worker. A valuable lesson from my practicum with CYMH *was learning to grow in professionalism.*” (M12)

Advanced knowledge/skills to improve youth mental health

“...As a practicum student, *this project changed the way I look at mental health* and how we can get the answers we need to offer the services others may need. As a community member, this project is vital to our collective work as human service workers and better understanding the needs of our demographics.” (M05)

“This project has opened my eyes to how little voice youth have when it comes to their own mental health. *My biggest takeaway from this project is how eager youth were to share with us and how much I have learned from these people.* They are filled with knowledge and wisdom and started conversations I never thought of.” (M01)

Strengthened social capital

“...The thing that makes this team so good is the *involvement of the expert professionals from the diverse fields*. There are experts in the field of social work, technical experts, professors, and people with industrial experience. Involvement of such professionals provides a lot of opportunity and scope for the self growth, and you get to learn not only about your own field but other fields as well.” (M19)

“...I enjoyed being part of the community events, connecting with outside organizations and people, and connecting with youth... *The opportunities to network and learn from others* (youth and other experts in mental health) at the events was very enriching and valuable.” (M28)

Developed self-efficacy

“As an emerging social worker, I’m interested in growing practical skills. But just as importantly I’m looking to develop my social work identity and understand how our values inform our day to day work. Working directly with the project team was a chance to observe how professionals embody those values. One example that stood out for me was the emphasis on *making sure everyone feels heard throughout the project*. In every meeting, I was very aware of how space was continually being made for everyone’s voice, including mine as a student.” (M04)

Inspired the pursue of personal goals

“I have been involved with the Children and Youth Mental Health Project for 3 years...The CYMH Project has made a positive impact in my life and my education...I have also gained research experience and skills from working with the CYMH Project, *where I have opened myself up to the world of Social Work and Psychology*. My involvement in the project has not only given me insight into mental health issues, but also knowledge on what youth would like to see from professionals and service providers... The CYMH Project has helped me get my foot in the door with research, and has given me opportunities that will help me along the rest of my education and career path.” (M002)

Discussion/Implications (I)

- Findings support that the chosen Self-determination Theory and Participatory Action Research approach were well integrated onto the project throughout;
- The engagement, participation, and people-focused made this project very successful in empowering not only the youth, but also all the volunteers, students, and assistants (i.e., mentees) involved;
- The variety of activities the mentees were able to involve and the opportunities to work with youth and various community partners enriched the learning and professional development for the mentees;

Discussion/Implications (2)

- The success of this training and mentorship to mentees requires not only a good chosen theoretical approach or research design, but time commitment. Daunting demand on supervision is an understatement.
- However, the reward is proportionate!

"Thank you for all you do and for including students along the way! I have learned many things from you that I hope to adopt in my own teaching practice." (M16)

Select References

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Big Brothers Big Sisters of Lethbridge and District

McMan Youth, Family and Community Services Lethbridge and areas

Dept. of Family and Community Support Services in the County of Grande Prairie

Thank You!

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