



THE PATH TO GROWING OPPORTUNITIES

Pathway to Growing Opportunities (2025 - 2030)

Childhood should be a time of growth, play, and possibility—but for thousands of children in Simcoe County, poverty stands

in the way. The 2021 Canada Census and County of Simcoe surveys indicate the reality for families living in poverty. **8% of residents in**

Simcoe County—over 42,000 people—live below the poverty line, including 7,110 children.

In the District of Muskoka, the rate is even higher at 10%, and 25% of lone-parent families with children under 18 are living in low-income households. Families face impossible choices between paying rent and buying groceries. **One in five people in Simcoe Muskoka experienced food insecurity in 2022, and housing costs consume more than 30% of the income for over 132,000 residents.**

These realities are not just statistics—they represent barriers that rob children of their right to thrive, as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which guarantees every child the right to education, play, health, and protection from harm.

YouthReach exists to change this story. For over a decade, we have worked to reshape futures by granting access to extracurricular programs that build confidence, resilience, and belonging. Since 2015, we have provided thousands of grants to children and youth who would have otherwise been excluded from sports, arts, and recreation due to financial hardship.

These opportunities are more than just activities—they are **lifelines that help break cycles of poverty**, improve mental health, and foster stronger, more resilient communities. Research confirms that participation in structured programs reduces isolation, strengthens emotional well-being, and equips youth with skills that last a lifetime.

Our vision for the next five years is bold: to provide a cumulative minimum of 5,000 grants by 2030 to children and youth across Simcoe County who face economic and social barriers. This strategic plan—Pathway to Growing Opportunities—is our roadmap to achieving that vision. It is grounded in our mission of granting opportunities for our kids' futures and guided by **values that define us: Kidcentric, Community-Oriented, Integrity, Inspirational, and Relevant.**

This plan aligns with global and provincial calls for action. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child reminds us that **every child has the right to play, learn, and develop their talents.** The Ontario Campaign 2000 Report Card and 2023 United Way Simcoe Muskoka ReThink Poverty data underscore the urgency of addressing systemic inequities that leave children behind. By investing in opportunities for youth, we are not only responding to immediate needs—we are contributing to long-term poverty reduction, healthier communities, and a stronger future for all.



Pathway to Growing Opportunities is more than a strategy—it is a promise. A promise that every child deserves the chance to participate, belong, and thrive. Together with our donors, partners, and community champions, we will continue to **#SayYesToAKid** and create pathways that transform lives, one opportunity at a time.

MISSION

Granting opportunities
for our kids' futures



VISION

By 2030, YouthReach will have provided a minimum of 5,000 grants to kids in Simcoe County who have faced financial barriers.

Values



Kidcentric – We keep kid's interests, needs, and program choices as the primary focus and work in partnership with them, their families and our program providers in support of their choices.

Community Oriented – We develop strong relationships and connections with our donors, key stakeholders and government, and advocate for their support for strong, healthy and resilient kids so that they and their families are better able to contribute to and participate in community life.

Relevant – We keep informed of the changing interests of youth and the ongoing development of new programs, and ensure kids are able to pursue relevant and potentially life-changing opportunities.

Inspirational – Funders and donors are inspired to support the possibility of life-changing opportunities for kids facing economic and social barriers who wouldn't otherwise have those opportunities.

Integrity – We say what we do, and we do what we say.



Strategic Priorities & Initiatives

1

Grow the capacity of YouthReach to better respond to increased demand

- a. Increase the staff and volunteer complement to assist the Executive Director.
- b. Increase the number of volunteers to serve on committees as needed, and help with philanthropic efforts.



2

Increase YouthReach's sustainability through revenue diversification

- a. Create and grow an internally restricted endowment fund to provide income to help offset administrative and staffing costs.
- b. Grow our philanthropic support across Simcoe County.
- c. Seek out small business and corporate sponsorships.
- d. Explore additional funding opportunities with more local municipalities, the County of Simcoe, and Province of Ontario.

3

Grow the number of granting opportunities provided and the number of kids served by YouthReach throughout Simcoe County

- a. Expand the number of granting opportunities and kids served in Simcoe County beyond Barrie and surrounding area.
- b. Develop a new grid for adjudicating funding for families, taking into consideration the complexities of families at different levels of low income, and families with multiple children.
- c. Develop relationships with more youth-serving program providers across Simcoe County.
- d. Develop relationships with more referral agencies and local government staff who are addressing poverty and the needs of low-income households.



4

Increase awareness of YouthReach and community engagement

- a. Strengthen our brand awareness and recognition, resulting in increased support from the community.
- b. Increase our presence at community events across Simcoe County.
- c. Grow the Brand Ambassador program.
- d. Increase our advocacy for kids facing economic and social barriers with Municipal, County, and Provincial politicians.