

The Propeller Project: 2022-23 Uplift Investments Evaluation Report

Prepared by Cathexis Consulting Inc.
for the Greater Toronto Airport Authority

September 7, 2023

Executive Summary: Evaluation of the Propeller Project Uplift Investments 2022-23

Through Propeller Project Uplift funding, the GTAA invested in six community organizations to deliver seven employment support projects beginning in Spring 2022. The projects focused on providing supports for job seekers and local community members to build marketable employment skills and explore career paths in a range of sectors (e.g., aviation, the arts, construction) within the Peel region. These investments have strengthened its relationships with community partners, and its reputation in the community as a “Good Neighbour”.

\$462,000 invested in employment supports and programming for the local communities surrounding the airport

6 community organizations (seven grants) were supported to deliver and/or expand programming

Shakespeare In Action

Backstage Centre Apprenticeship Program

\$25,000

- 12 young people received hands-on training in the theater/production industry
- 12 people got paid employment

Blue Door Support Services

Construct Program – Peel

\$75,000

- 40 young people trained to work in the construction industry
- 34 people got paid employment

Brands for Canada

Suitable Impressions Program

\$62,000

- 1,358 jobseekers received job search support and professional wardrobe

JAYU Festival Inc.

The iAM Program

\$75,000

- 145 young people participated in arts/employment programming
- 49 people got paid employment

Urban Pilots Network Inc.

Top Flyers Canada

\$75,000

- 9 young people received training and support to work in the aviation industry
- 3 got paid employment

ACCES

Ukrainian Newcomer Assistance Program

\$75,000

- 2,450 Ukrainian newcomers received employment and job search support
- 135 people got paid employment

Speed Mentoring Peel

\$75,000

- 848 jobseekers participated and expanded their professional Canadian networks

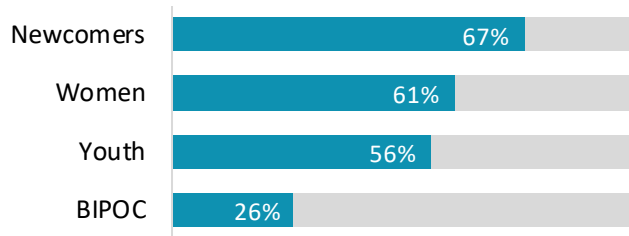


All grantees said they would highly recommend working with Toronto Pearson to others, resulting in an exceptionally **high Net Promoter Score (NPS) of 100**. GTAA was found to be a uniquely supportive and flexible funder, responsive to changes and committed to building capacity.

Executive Summary: Evaluation of the Propeller Project Uplift Investments 2022-23

The progress made and the outcomes achieved by the funded projects was substantial.

4,862 people received employment training and other supports



* The large number of Ukrainian newcomers served by the ACCES skews percent of BIPOC people supported. Without ACCES Ukrainian Newcomer Assistant program numbers, BIPOC would represent 67%

3,511 people gained marketable employment skills

233 people got paid employment

175+ training sessions and workshops delivered

BRANDS FOR CANADA

"I have hit a roadblock financially and if it wasn't for programs like this, I would not have been able to feel confident on my first day of work."



"The program granted me with certificates, colleagues to connect with, and more information than I had when I joined the TFC which puts me a step ahead than I was prior to joining."



"Through Construct, I was able to learn about... different pathways to get into construction. This program offers a lot of opportunities where you can make connection that can lead to finding a good career."



"The training session was very informative. At the job fair, I finally found my first job in Canada."



"It allowed me to move out of my comfort zone in a safe and supportive space. JAYU is very encouraging of helping those who do not necessarily have experience in the arts gain encouragement and opportunities for growth."



"BCTAP was my first touch in stage management which has resulted in a lot [more] work over the past year."

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Introduction



Toronto Pearson. Investing in Communities.

The Greater Toronto Airport Authority (GTAA) is committed to being a good neighbour. It strives to have a positive impact by investing in social good and community-building initiatives through its community investment program, the Propeller Project, which includes Uplift investments and Nest investments. This evaluation report focuses exclusively on the 2022 to 2023 Propeller Project Uplift investments.

Propeller Project Uplift Investments: 2022-23

Since 2019, the GTAA has strategically focused Propeller Project Uplift investments on the issue of **underemployment**, defined as employment in a job below an individual's level of skill, training and/or education. It is an issue that disproportionately affects people living in GTAA's neighbouring communities and is a major barrier to shared regional economic prosperity.

In 2022, the GTAA was still recovering from the impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic and had fewer resources than in past to distribute through the Propeller Project. At the same time, urgent and pressing employment issues within the community had deepened, particularly among equity seeking community members (e.g., youth, BIPOC, and newcomers). As a result, the GTAA decided to direct the 2022-23 Uplift investment dollars towards **more general employment programming** to support brighter employment futures, with a particular focus on capacity building and wrap around services.

The GTAA invested in six community organizations (to delivered seven projects) organizations) to begin in Spring 2022. Projects focused on providing supports for job seekers and supporting local community members to build marketable employment skills and explore career paths in a range of sectors (e.g., aviation, the arts, and construction). Total investment across the seven projects was \$462,000.

In future years, the GTAA intends to return to a greater focus on underemployment for Propeller Project Uplift investments.

Evaluation of Investments

Evaluation has been identified as a critical component of the Propeller Project, built in from the very beginning to ensure the GTAA and its stakeholders have the information and evidence needed to:

- Ensure the program is achieving its goals
- Facilitate learning and improvement
- Support accountability and decision-making
- Enable communication about activities and impacts

As part of the implementation plan, each investment project partner was provided with standard reporting templates and hands-on evaluation consulting support. Evaluation specialists from Cathexis Consulting Inc. worked one-on-one with the six funded projects; providing advice and feedback on their evaluation plans, data collection tool design and reporting as required. Each funded project submitted an interim report and final report, with evaluation information, at the end of their project.

This unique capacity building feature of the Propeller Project enabled more accurate and informative reporting and helped build community partners' internal evaluation capacity, better enabling them to gather meaningful evidence, report and communicate progress, and inform future plans.

This evaluation report highlights the progress and achievements of the seven 2022-23 investment projects as reported in individual grantee reports.

Propeller Project Uplift Investment Overview: 2022-23

Funded projects

The following six organizations received Uplift funding for programs designed to break down barriers to employment and cultivate opportunity for communities around Toronto Pearson

Shakespeare In Action

Backstage Centre Technical Apprenticeship Program

\$25,000

Provides paid skills development and hands-on training to youth interested in building careers in the theater/production industry.

JAYU Festival Inc.

The iAM Program

\$75,000

Provide free arts, social justice, leadership, and employment training programming for equity-deserving youth; access to employment opportunities and future career paths and build social justice and leadership skills.

Urban Pilots Network Inc.

Top Flyers Canada

\$75,000

Prepares black and racialized youth for entry-level employment with leading aviation agencies. The inaugural program provided access to specialized aviation training, mentoring and scholarships.

Blue Door Support Services

Construct Program – Peel

\$75,000

Recruits, trains and employs youth to learn and work on-site with qualified trades people to prepare for a career in the construction industry. Also provides wrap around services including supports for meals, transportation, mental health and rental assistance.

Brands for Canada

Suitable Impressions Program

\$62,000

A first impressions-focused employment program that coaches participants, provides new work attire and personal care products to help them to succeed in a job interview.

ACCES

Ukrainian Newcomer Assistance Program

\$75,000

Provides employment service supports to recent Ukrainian newcomers, to help secure employment and succeed at meaningful employment in the GTA.

Speed Mentoring Peel

\$75,000

Hosts events where jobseekers have a series of one-on-one conversations with mentors and build their professional network.

Across these 7 projects, the GTAA invested **\$462,000 for employment supports and programming**. In most cases, the GTAA was one of several project funders, enhancing and enabling larger scale programming than would have otherwise been possible.

The pages that follow provide more details about the accomplishments and outcomes of each of the seven 2022-23 funded projects.

Blue Door Support Services

Construct - Peel

1 year grant (June 2022-May 2023)
Uplift Funding: \$75,000

Objective(s):

Recruits, trains and employs youth to learn and work on-site with qualified trades people to prepare for a career in the construction industry.

Target population:

Individuals at-risk of homelessness within the Peel region.

Program activities:

With Uplift funding, the program was able to expand its program into the Peel Region. Replicating its success in Durham region, the program takes a holistic approach to support individuals with technical skills and training and wrap around services including supports for meals, transportation, mental health and rental assistance.

- The program formed new partnerships within the Peel Region (WCG, YMCA Peel and Humber College) to support participant recruitment and training. The partnerships enabled the program to expand its unionized employment outcomes offered to six.
- The funding enabled the program to launch a new training centre that transformed program delivery. The new centre allowed each participant access to their own computer to work on online materials in the LMS curriculum and provide hands-on training including building sawhorses, stairs, railings, and park benches.
- Participants were provided training to attain four certifications through Humber College, including First Aid & CPR, WHMIS, Health and Safety Awareness, and Working at Heights and three other certifications including Soft Skills Solutions training and field worker and student certifications through a Construction Project Management software called Procure.



Outcomes & benefits:

40 individuals at-risk of homelessness from across the Peel region completed the programming. Participants included:

- 29 BIPOC
- 19 youth
- 9 women
- 41 newcomers
- 6 people with disabilities
- **34 (85%)** of participants **became employed** and 22 (55%) registered into unionized apprenticeships.
- Participants **gained valuable skills and benefits** from the program:
 - 100% increased employability skills
 - 100% gained construction math skills
 - 100% improved literacy skills
 - 100% increased sense of self-worth, confidence and accountability
 - 85% felt their career stability and development was improved
 - 87% reported improved housing stability
- The **new training centre** has transformed program delivery and due to its success, the program plans to double the number of participants it serves in Peel region to 80 in the coming year.

Brands for Canada *Suitable Impressions Program*

1 year grant (June 2022-May 2023)
Uplift Funding: \$62,000

Objective(s):

A first impressions-focused employment program that coaches participants, provides new work attire and personal care products to help them to succeed in a job interview.

Target population:

Jobseekers across the the GTA who are currently enrolled in other employment support programs in the community.

Program activities:

The Uplift funding provided support for the program to undertake the following:

- Presentations and outreach to community partners to recruit participants to their workshops.
- Half -day workshops covering topics such as: how to prepare for the interview, workplace etiquette, body language, maintaining a positive mindset, grooming & hygiene, work-appropriate attire, emotional intelligence, financial literacy, wardrobe styling & selection, how to interview in-person and online.
- Offer new work attire and personal care products to participants (particularly non-traditional sizes).
- Engage GTAA employees as program volunteers to process donations (debranding, bagging and tag removal) for distribution.

BRANDS FOR CANADA

Outcomes & benefits:

1,358 people participated in the program, over double its planned target of 600. The majority of participants are under 26-year-old with roughly 10% over 45. *

- 883 BIPOC (65%)
- 815 youth (60%)
- 760 women (56%)
- 502 newcomers (37%)

- **57 workshops** were delivered in collaboration with **10 community partner** agencies.
- Participants gained **valuable benefits*** from the program
 - **75%** reported that the **clothing had increased their job search confidence**, which is essential to securing employment
- Participant feedback:
 - “I have hit a roadblock financially and if it wasn't for programs like this, I would not have been able to feel confident on my first day of work.”
 - “This is a great initiative and is really motivating for people who find the job searching process overwhelming and difficult.”

*Estimates based on participant surveys collected between June 2022 – June 2023. n=382

Objective(s):

Provide employment services and job-search supports to help Ukrainian newcomers secure employment in Canada.

Target population:

Ukrainian newcomers in the GTA.

Program activities:

The Ukrainian Newcomer Assistance Program is a free program that supports Ukrainian refugees across the GTA to find their first job in Canada by providing customized resources and referrals including:

- Information Sessions (in collaboration with Community Partners) to meet with Ukrainian job seekers to assess their needs
- Professional networking and speed mentoring events
- One-on-one employment counselling
- Resume writing workshops and customized interview preparation
- Mental health, upskilling and ESL language training/ supports
- Job fairs and hiring events (in-person and virtual)

Outcomes & benefits:

- 2,450*** Ukrainian newcomers participated in workshops, training, mental health workshops
 - 2,450 newcomers
 - 1,593 women
 - 1,250 youth
- **135** participants have secured jobs
- Extensive supports were provided to Ukrainian newcomers:
 - 1,947 participants developed personalized work plans to help them secure their first employment
 - 11 information sessions to assess participant needs – 514 participants
 - 9 Bootcamps (each spanning 2-3 weeks) – 368 participants
 - 9 Hiring Events (5 Online and 4 in-person Job Fairs) – 150 participants
 - 2 Speed Mentoring® events – 77 mentees, 28 mentors
- **126** Employers were engaged and participated in hiring events
 - Raised awareness among employers regarding the influx of new Ukrainian immigrants
 - Facilitated improved support for transition into Canadian employment
- ACCES established robust **partnerships with Ukrainian community organizations**

* Total number of program participants was enabled by substantial federal government funding.

ACCES

Speed Mentoring Peel

1 year grant (Apr 2022-Mar 2023)
Uplift Funding: \$75,000

Objective(s):

Increase newcomer connections to the labour market by creating connections between job seekers/mentees and employers/professionals in the Peel region.

Target population:

Job seekers in the Peel region (87% of population served are newcomers).

Program activities:

The Speed Mentoring® program enables participants to build their network with employers and professionals in their field, receive advice about their job search, and meet employer contacts who can refer them to job opportunities (through a series of 10-minute one-on-one conversations with mentors). Job seekers are encouraged to follow up with each of the mentors post-event, through LinkedIn and ask for introductions to others in their network.

Between April 2022 and March 2023, the Speed Mentoring Peel program hosted:

- 35 Speed Mentoring sessions in the Peel region, to connect skilled new Canadians to local employers.
- A GTAA Mini Virtual Speed Mentoring Marathon, paired GTAA's industry leaders with internationally trained jobseekers. It was the largest Peel Speed Mentoring event of the year.
- 29 Guest speaker sessions (each 2-3 hours in duration).



Outcomes & benefits:

848* Jobseekers participated in Speed Mentoring sessions in the Peel region

- 87% of ACCES clients are newcomers
- **362 employers** and industry leaders in the Peel region participated as mentors
- **36 Speed Mentoring sessions** were hosted in the Peel region, including one GTAA Virtual Speed Mentoring Marathon, that engaged GTAA employers and industry leaders
- Participating jobseekers:
 - Connected with local Canadian employers
 - Connected with other professionals who shared experiences and advice
 - Expanded their professional networks in Canada, the lack of which is a common barrier to newcomers securing employment
- The Speed Mentoring events are not intended specifically for hiring; however, they may lead to participants securing jobs in the future.

* Total number of program participants was enabled by substantial federal government funding.

Urban Pilots Network Inc.

Top Flyers Canada

1 year grant (July 2022-June 2023)
Uplift Funding: \$75,000



Objective(s):

The Top Flyers Canada (TFC) supports black and racialized youth with a desire to pursue careers in aviation to develop skills, gain certifications and make connections within the aviation industry. The ultimate objective is to improve diversity and inclusion in the aviation industry in Canada. This inaugural program is operated by Urban Pilots Network, a small local volunteer-based organization.

Target population:

Black and racialized young people interested in pursuing a career in the aviation industry within the Peel region.

Program activities:

TFC helps build the skills and marketability of youth by providing mentorship and networking with senior black pilots, executives, managers and engineers and access to specialized aviation training. The program helps participants better understand industry expectations, hiring and recruitment processes and increase their competencies to prepare for positions with airlines and aviation companies.

Programming and supports for TFC participants included:

- Crew Resource Management course delivered by Jazz Aviation
- First aid certification delivered by St. Johns Ambulance
- Flight Simulator program at Threshold Aviation (3 sessions, 3 hours each, of simulator time on a Boeing 737 for each participant)
- Laptops loaded with flight training software to aid their development
- Year-long mentorship through Zoom and other communications
- Year-end UPN gala event. Described as “a collective of aviation professionals (150+), all in one room for a networking extravaganza”

Outcomes & benefits:

- 9 youth completed the TFC program.
 - 9 BIPOC
 - 6 youth
 - 1 women
- **3 participants gained employment** within the aviation industry.
- Participants **gained valuable credentials, skills and benefits** from the program that will support their pursuit of careers in aviation:
 - Advanced **early career training/credentials** in Crew Resource Management (9 participants), First Aid (8 participants) and Flight Simulation (2 participants). Giving them a competitive advantage and making them more marketable for aviation-industry jobs
 - Greater **understanding of aviation career pathways** and opportunities
 - Increased level of **confidence** in themselves and their likelihood of success
 - Increased **sense of belonging** in the industry
 - Increased **networks** within the aviation industry
 - One participant received a **UPN scholarship**
- **Aviation employers** also benefit from **access to greater diversity**, offered through the development of a pipeline of qualified and interested young black and racialized youth ready to join the industry.

Shakespeare in Action (SIA)

Backstage Centre Technical Apprenticeship Program

1 year grant (May 2022-Apr 2023)
Uplift Funding: \$25,000



Objective(s):

Provide paid skills development and hands-on training to help youth interested in working in the theater/production industry to launch their careers.

Target population:

Youth, aged 15 to 30. Priority is given to newcomers, BIPOC, 2SLGBTQ+, and folks who live in priority neighbourhoods in northwest Toronto/York-South Weston.

Program activities:

Uplift funding supported two seasons of BCTAP programming, which included two live theater productions:

- An outdoor summer production of **Harabogee (할아버지) & Me**
- An indoor winter production of **Romeo and Juliet. And Action.**

For each production, SIA aimed to recruit 10 youth for five weeks (10 hours per week) to support each professional production, pairing them with practicing industry mentors. BCTAP apprentices each received an honorarium of \$750 for their apprenticeship as part of the program.

Apprentices took on numerous roles in supporting the productions, while also having the opportunity to observe the process of making/producing a theatrical production from start to finish.

Participants had the opportunity to shadow technical positions:

- Stage management
- Front of house management
- Marketing and outreach
- Costume/prop/set design
- Other aspects of production

Outcomes & benefits:

12 apprentices, all considering careers in the arts, participated across the two productions. Among them were:

- 12 youth
- 10 women
- 8 BIPOC
- 6 newcomers
- 6 2SLGBTQ+
- All participants received an honorarium for their work, creating a **paid work** opportunity for 12 youth
- Participants gained **valuable skills and benefits**, including:
 - Marketable experience to put on their resumes
 - Connections/network building with working professionals in the theatre community
 - Vocabulary and knowledge to draw on when creating/producing their own creative work
 - Relevant skills (e.g., sewing, stage managing, stage management, design)
 - Deeper understanding of how to succeed in their chosen industry
- One participant gained **employment** with the Toronto City Opera as an assistant stage manager after finishing the program. Others are still in school.
- **2 theatrical productions** provided to the Weston and Mount Dennis community for free/low cost.

JAYU Festival Inc.

The iAM Program

1 year grant (June 2022-May 2023)
Uplift Funding: \$75,000

Objective(s):

Provide free arts, social justice, leadership, and employment training programming for equity-deserving youth; access to employment opportunities and future career paths and build social justice and leadership skills.

Target population:

Equity-deserving youth aged 12-26 from the Peel Region.

Program activities:

Uplift funding supported the ability to expand the delivery of 15 different iAM programs (ranging from 4-8 weeks) including DSLR photography, mobile photography, collaging, and poetry/spoken word to youth in the Peel region.

The programming was delivered online and in-person at Brampton Public Library and Studio89 in Mississauga (both new partnerships for the organization).

The Uplift funding supported the hiring of iAM's first Employment Manager which enabled the organization to expand its employment offerings to participants.

Through the iAM Program youth were provided employment through paid Junior Mentor positions and access to other opportunities via hiring partners such as KUUMBA, TMU, ArtworksTO, and The Toronto International Festival of Authors.



Outcomes & benefits:

145 individuals participated in JAYU programming from across the Peel region. Participants included:

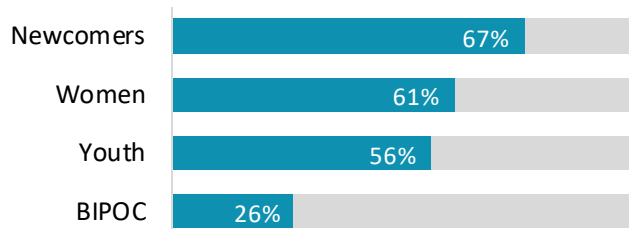
- 145 youth
 - 119 BIPOC
 - 90 women
 - 41 newcomers
 - 10 people with disabilities
- **83 workshops** were delivered in Peel region (in 15 different program areas (4-8 workshops each session).
 - **49 youth were connected to employment opportunities** through their participation in the program. 19 youth were hired as junior mentors for iAM program delivery.
 - Participating youth gained **valuable technical and professional development skills**:
 - Painting techniques and colour theory; photography lighting and editing techniques; Literary devices, the history of spoken word as a tool for activism, and poetic forms.
 - Financial literacy, taxes, budgeting, artist bio and CV, time management and grant writing.
 - The program gave participants the opportunity to showcase their work in professional settings and increased their sense of community (93%), self esteem (90%) and self-confidence (90%).
 - The iAM program **increased its external hiring partners** from 11 to 21 (due in large part to the new Employment Manager) and developed **2 new community partnerships** to support ongoing in-person program delivery within the community.

Overall Uplift Achievements Across the Projects

\$462,000 invested in employment supports and programming for the local community surrounding the airport

6 community organizations supported to deliver and expand programming

4,862 people received employment training and other supports



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3,511 people gained marketable employment skills

233 people got paid employment

175+ training sessions and workshops delivered

BRANDS FOR CANADA

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"The program granted me with certificates, colleagues to connect with, and more information than I had when I joined the TFC which puts me a step ahead than I was prior to joining."



"Through Construct, I was able to learn about ... different pathways to get into construction. This program offers a lot of opportunities where you can make connection that can lead to finding a good career."



"The training session was very informative. At the job fair, I finally found my first job in Canada."



"It allowed me to move out of my comfort zone in a safe and supportive space. JAYU is very encouraging of helping those who do not necessarily have experience in the arts gain encouragement and opportunities for growth."



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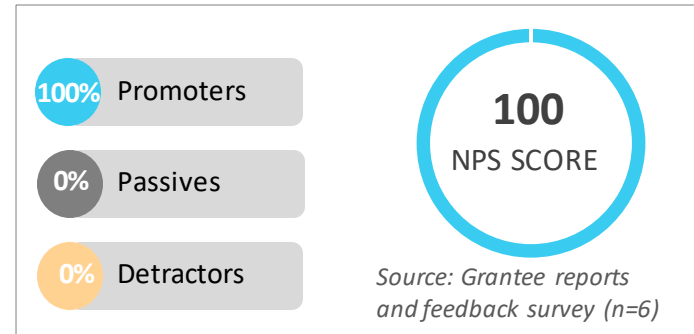
GTAA's reputation as a funder

The GTAA's 2022-23 Uplift investments through the Propeller Project have strengthened its relationships with community partners and has significantly **improved its reputation in the community as a "Good Neighbour"**.

The funded programs worked with **over 87 partner organizations** to deliver their programs, amplifying the GTAA's exposure with many additional organizations.

In their feedback, grantees found the GTAA to be a **uniquely supportive and flexible funder**, that provided much more than just money. What they appreciated most about the Propeller Project approach was:

- The **flexibility of funding and responsiveness to changes** needed to enable project success (to respond to opportunities or address challenges that emerge).
- The **commitment to capacity building**, evidenced through:
 - **GTAA staff generosity** in sharing their time, knowledge and expertise (and in some cases volunteering) with organizations.
 - The inclusion of **evaluation support**, and opportunity to work closely with the Propeller Project's evaluation team to enhance outcome measurement and improvement.



All grantees indicated that their involvement with the Propeller Project had **improved their opinion of Toronto Pearson**. They were **particularly impressed** with the GTAA's **genuine commitment to the overall well-being of the Toronto Pearson community** and the surrounding region (especially around issues of employment).

All grantees also said they would highly recommend working with Toronto Pearson to others, resulting in an exceptionally high **Net Promoter Score (NPS) of 100**.

"Before this project I was not aware of... the airport's commitments to supporting communities in the surrounding area...."

"[We] are grateful for the feedback to improve our survey approach...This ongoing feedback informs a constantly iterative approach to program design to maximize program outcomes."

"I appreciate the willingness of the Ruba, and the Propeller Project team to take the time to understand the needs of the program and work with the team to make sure that the investment had the greatest possible value on the program."

"Our involvement with the Propeller Project has demonstrated to us that Toronto Pearson Airport is committed to supporting and enriching the communities in which it does business."

Conclusions

In April 2022, the GTAA, through Propeller Project Uplift funding, invested in six one-year community projects that focused on providing supports for job seekers and local community members to build marketable employment skills and explore career paths in a range of sectors (e.g., aviation, the arts, construction) within the Peel region.

The **progress made** and the **outcomes achieved** by the funded projects was **substantial**.

Together, these investments contributed to:

- **4,862** jobseekers received **employment training** and other supports
- **3,511** people gained **marketable employment skills**
- **233** people got **paid employment**
- **175+** **training** sessions and workshops delivered in the Peel Region

By investing primarily in proven programs and supporting their operations (and often expansion) into the Peel Region, Toronto Pearson's investments brought many new **direct employment-related benefits to local residents**.

These investments continue **to build and strengthen** Toronto Pearson's **reputation** and **relationships** with community partners.

- GTAA's is seen as a **unique and valued funder** due to its **supportive and flexible approach**
- Its commitment to **building capacity** through hands-on **evaluation support** was appreciated. It helped funded projects to plan and report on their impacts in more tangible and meaningful ways, and will support learning and improvement of overall programming for these organizations.

Looking forward

The GTAA should continue to:

- Build and deepen its community partner relationships and investments in its neighbouring communities.
- Champion the issue of underemployment, which continues to be a significant challenge in the communities surrounding the airport, and persistent barrier to future workforce development and prosperity.
- Provide evaluation support to grantees, as this support increases capacity and enhances reporting and learning for both grantees and the GTAA.

Underemployment is still a somewhat nebulous issue that is not well understood. To improve impact of investments, GTAA could:

- Provide more early communications, education and supports for potential grantees to increase understanding of what the GTAA is looking to fund through the Propeller Project Uplift investment focus in underemployment.
- Consider longer term or multi-year investments to enable partners more time to design and implement their projects, learn and revise accordingly.
- Continue to learn about what works to address underemployment and communicate these learnings with partners.