



Canadian Evaluation Society
Société canadienne d'évaluation

CES-CESEF Student Evaluation Case Competition 2016

Case for the Final Round

Evaluation Plan for Young Adult Cancer Canada's Support Events

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This case was developed strictly for educational purposes.

This Request for Proposals that forms the case does not entail any commitment on the part of Young Adult Cancer Canada, the Canadian Evaluation Society (CES), the CES Educational Fund or any of the 2016 competition sponsors.



Canadian Evaluation Society
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1.0 Overview of Young Adult Cancer Canada

1.1 The Organization and Its Mission

[Young Adult Cancer Canada](#) (YACC) was established in 2000 (the name changed from RealTime Cancer in June 2008) by Geoff Eaton after his first cancer challenge. Geoff's vision focused on educating and supporting young adults. At the core of that vision was the belief that cancer – like all of life's challenges – brings with it valuable lessons and experiences.

YACC research revealed that over 8,300 young adults were diagnosed with cancer in Canada each year and that their survival rates were virtually unchanged since the 1970s. And, most importantly, there were no readily available and relevant support programs to help young adults with cancer deal with the very unique issues they face. Young adults with cancer need and deserve an organization wholly focused on providing customized support programs to help them deal with their cancer experience. Given there was not one organization in Canada with this as its focus the vision was obvious: YACC had to be that national cancer organization providing resources for young adults looking for inspiration, information and support.

YACC's mission is to support young adults as they live with, through and beyond cancer. The organization aims to be the connection to peers, a bridge out of isolation and a source of inspiration. Any cancer, any stage, YACC's got their back.

YACC offers a number of programs for young adult survivors and supporters to help connect them with others who 'get it.' Currently, YACC is focused on the promotion and growth of six primary programs:

- The online community;
- Two Social Events (Localife, the Big Cancer Hook-up); and
- Three Support Events (Retreat Yourself, Retreat Yourself Adventure and the annual Survivor Conference) – the focus of this evaluation.

YACC is currently based in St. John's, NL, and provides programming across Canada. YACC has a staff of seven and an annual operating budget of \$1,031,755 of which approximately 44% or \$450,000 is allocated towards Support Events. These events are delivered primarily by two staff – a Program Director and a Community Engagement Manager.

1.2 Overview of Support Events

YACC's Support Events bring people together for mutual support. The events are free to young adult cancer survivors, diagnosed with cancer between the ages of 15 and 39 and who are currently 18 to 39 years old (including people in treatment and remission), and one supporter (a friend, sibling, or partner, aged 18-39, but not parents). The participants are responsible for their travel to the event, though travel assistance is available for those in need. The first retreat took place in 2005 in Newfoundland and Labrador, and the first official Survivor Conference was held in 2007 in Alberta. The first Retreat Adventure took place in Newfoundland and Labrador in 2012.

The purpose of all the support events is to provide a safe space for young adults to connect, share their stories, get support and information, and feel less isolated. Having fun with people who get it is also in the center of how events are planned and delivered.

Through the Support Events, it is expected that participants will:

- experience a deep sense of connection with peers;
- feel an enhancement in their quality of life;
- be better equipped to deal with what it means to live with cancer as a young adult.

1.3 Event Descriptions

Retreat Yourself

Retreat Yourself offers weekend retreats for young adults affected by cancer to get together with other young adults with cancer. The event is tailored to survivors in or recently out of treatment, or anyone who has not yet connected with other young adults dealing with cancer.

To attend a retreat, participants must have received a cancer diagnosis between the ages of 15 and 39 and be between 18 and 39 years old. They must be healthy enough and not require intense medical care as the events are often in remote areas. In addition, they cannot be a previous Retreat participant, unless they have had a recurrence of cancer since their first attendance. Eligibility is confirmed through the application process.

The Retreats offer four main activities:

- i. **Welcoming and introduction:** Participants take some time to get to know one another from the start so they're comfortable and open for the rest of the weekend.
- ii. **Small group discussions:** Participants discuss topics that are relevant and chosen by them, including such topics as relationships, family and friends, sexuality and intimacy, fear of recurrence, the future, and more. The entire group decides on four main topics and they discuss each one throughout the weekend. Of course, they're not limited to these topics and many other discussions happen spontaneously throughout the weekend.
- iii. **Information and tools:** YACC gives participants an update on the situation of young adult with cancer in Canada and also gives them some tools to help in their daily lives.
- iv. **Free time:** The free time is a mix of structured and non-structured activities. Depending on the weather and the location, some people will just go out for a walk, swim in the pool, play basketball or volleyball, or just take a little afternoon nap. A game night is also organized which gets participants together to play.

Over the years, Retreat Yourself has held weekend retreats across Canada, including:

- 2005 in Burry Heights, NL
- 2006-2007 in Mont Tremblant, QC
- 2008 in Orford, QC
- 2009 in Mont Tremblant, QC and in Abbotsford, BC
- 2010 in Abbotsford, BC
- 2011 in Rocky Harbour, NL and in Abbotsford, BC
- 2012 in St. Anns Bay, Cape Breton and in Morley, AB
- 2013 in Lake Louise, AB, Abbotsford, BC, Wolfville, NS
- 2014 in Cobourg, ON
- 2015 in Cobourg, ON
- 2016 in Abbotsford, AB

Many participants are recently out of treatment and have never attended another YACC event. Participants share their stories and talk about what's bothering them about cancer, hang out, let loose, and build relationships.

Retreat Yourself

Each day at the Retreat consisted of a lot of sharing, in small and large groups. I expected that. There was even sharing during the free time and I loved it! I just kept thinking to myself, 'How have I not been doing this?' It was so natural to share thoughts and feelings about what each one of us was going through. I found comfort in that. Jokes about having 'chemo brain' and being challenged with short-term memory was the norm; people in the room would laugh with you because they too know what it's like. I've never experienced that, and I still laugh about it now.

– Hanna, leukemia survivor

Retreat Yourself Adventure

Retreat Yourself Adventure is for survivors who want to learn more about themselves, and who crave a physical challenge. This event empowers survivors to keep moving forward by increasing their confidence in their bodies and mind post-treatment/cancer.

Retreat Yourself Adventure gives 17 young adult cancer survivors and supporters a chance to tackle survivorship issues while ziplining and hiking in Newfoundland on an adventure that will push their limits and challenge them physically and mentally. The first Retreat Yourself Adventure, in 2012, had 11 participants. The three following (2013, 2014, 2015) each had 17 participants. In the future, YACC is hoping to offer more than one Retreat Yourself Adventure each year.

This event is for those who are less interested in sitting around a cozy retreat centre and are more interested in discussing their cancer experiences while speeding through the forest in a harness or hiking difficult trails. The activities aren't easy, so participants need to feel confident that their bodies can take four days of real adventure activity.

Eligibility for Retreat Yourself Adventure includes:

- Young adult cancer survivors between 18 and 39 years old who were diagnosed between 15 and 39 years old. They can bring one supporter who is also between 18 and 39.
- Participants have to be in good and stable health.

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- Participants should be at least one year post-treatment and up to a maximum of five years post treatment.¹
 - Some spaces are tentatively reserved for survivors and supporters who have never been to a YACC event, and a few more spaces are set aside for alumni.

All applications are approved on a first come, first served basis. YACC offers travel assistance to help cover the cost of travel.

A Retreat Yourself Adventure

Each day of our adventure was themed and paired with a unique activity. Day one was about conquering our theme of “fear” with ziplining—everyone brought trust and self-confidence with them and faced their fears like champions. The second day was all about “change” as we took to the Atlantic for a day of sea kayaking. We faced wind, sun, and rain, and sang through it all. As we know, young adult cancer survivors go through so many changes and they have to adapt and find the good in there. The third day was a big day as we took on Gros Morne Mountain. Our theme for the day was “believe,” and whether people hiked the intense trail to the base of the mountain or all the way to the top, it was a wonderful and enlightening experience. We are so grateful for this group to have had the courage to push their limits or to stay within. It takes a lot of strength to do both.

— Karine Chaliflour, Program Director

Survivor Conference

The Survivor Conference is an annual event focused on making “the rest of our life the best of our life”. It’s a time to connect or reconnect in person, and learn useful tips to live a healthier and happier life. It also works on using the experiences with cancer to help other young adults across the country. The Conference is open to young adult cancer patients/survivors between 18 and 39 years-old who were diagnosed between 15 and 39 years-old. They can bring one supporter who is also between 18 and 39. Participants can come back every year as long as space permits.

¹ YACC makes exceptions for people living with metastatic or chronic cancer who will never be done treatment but who are in good physical shape.

Over the years Survivor Conference has been held in:

- 2007 in Exshaw, AB
- 2009 and 2010 in St. John's, NL
- 2011 in Ottawa, ON
- 2012, 2014², and 2015 in Toronto, ON

Survivor Conference Travel Assistance

Travel assistance is available to survivors/patients and their supporters who may need it. The amount of assistance is based on where a participant lives in Canada and the overall demand for assistance. Travel assistance is also determined by the cost of travel (flight, bus, train, etc.), the participant's financial resources, and any money they are able to raise. Depending on the financial situation, YACC may cover up to 50 % of a participant's travel costs, up to a maximum of what is allowed, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Travel Assistance for Survivor Conference

<u>Province / Territory³</u>	<u>\$ Amount</u>
British Columbia	450
Alberta	450
Saskatchewan	400
Manitoba	400
Ontario	400
Quebec	300
New Brunswick	350
Nova Scotia	200
Prince Edward Island	350
Newfoundland and Labrador	100
Yukon	475
Northwest Territories	450

² Conference 2013 was scheduled to be in the fall of that year but was pushed to May of 2014 so the event could be held in a warmer month.

³ At this time, Nunavut does not participate. YACC would provide assistance to a Nunavut participant.

In addition, the Conference has a registration fee of \$199 that is waived if the participant is unable to pay. Once at the Conference hotel, all meals and accommodation are covered by YACC.

Survivor Conference

Attending the 2012 Survivor Conference was the first time I felt normal in a year. No one looked at me funny, said, 'Ooooh, but you look so good,' or stared awkwardly when I said I had cancer. The feelings and worries that I face are normal. Everyone in the group had—or has—these thoughts. We are all there to help each other and share our experiences. I felt a part of something magical, something life-changing, and it brought me out of isolation. It was acceptable to talk openly and honestly about emotional, physical, or any struggles.

— Lynsey, conference participant

1.4 Awareness Building for Support Events and Participation

YACC promotes its events via its website, social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter), e-newsletters sent to thousands of people and messages to health professionals across the country. Occasionally, YACC creates event posters and sends them to key health professionals in cancer centres. It also sends pamphlets and contact cards to major cancer centres and hospitals in Canada.

YACC partners with dozens of organizations in Canada that work in the cancer field. These organizations promote YACC events on their websites and to their network, and YACC returns the favour. Examples of organizations where this reciprocal relationship exists include Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada, Rethink Breast Cancer, and The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society of Canada.

At this time, the demand is higher than the capacity for YACC's Support Events and therefore, the organization promotes accordingly. In fact, there is a waiting list for most Support Events as a result of the above-mentioned promotion, as well as through word-of-mouth.

YACC works with a marketing company for branding. They develop the organization's pamphlets and help in website renewal. They also create logos, posters, and other branding material upon request.

One of the organization's strategic objectives, as stated in YACC's [Strategic Plan](#), is to change the lives of more survivors by expanding the reach of Support

Events. Attendance records provide a breakdown of Support Event annual participation rates as shown in Table 2 and the distribution of participants by province of origin (Table 3).

Table 2: Annual Participation Rates

<u>Retreat Yourself</u>			<u>Survivor Conference</u>		<u>Retreat Yourself Adventure</u>	
Year	Capacity	Actual #	Capacity	Actual #	Capacity	Actual #
2005	n/a	27	no event		no event	
2006	n/a	31				
2007	n/a	29	30	28		
2008	31	31	40	32		
2009	East 30	18	60	50		
	West 23	23				
2010	23	23	55	44		
2011	East 28	16	80	79		
	West 23	23				
2012	East 26	26	90	88	11	17
	West 26	24				
2013	NS 26	17	no event		17	17
	AB 26	21				
	BC 24	22				
2014	East (Apr) 26	24	93	93	17	17
	East (Nov) 26	26				
	BC 24	19				
2015	ON 26	19	100	89	17	17

Notes:

1. Numbers are for survivors and supporters, and exclude staff and facilitators.
2. Participants are 65% women and 35% men.

Table 3: Participation Rates Across Canada and USA (%)

<u>Western Canada</u>		<u>Central Canada</u>		<u>Eastern Canada</u>		<u>USA</u>
BC	14.5	ON	38.8	NB	1.4	0.6
AB	15.5	QC	10.2	NS	5.7	
SK	1.1			PEI	0.6	
MB	6.5			NL	5.1	
Totals	37.6%		49%		12.8%	0.6%

1.5 Participant Feedback

YACC values feedback on all of its events to help ensure they are providing the best programs and services possible to the young adult patient/survivor community. At the end of each event YACC administers event assessment forms. These forms consist of a number of questions using a Likert scale to assess client satisfaction of the event as well as asking them to remember how they felt before the event and how they feel after the event (e.g., emotional well-being before/after; sense of connect to the young adult cancer community before/after).

Results from the assessment forms are analyzed and reviewed by the team of Support Event organizers and facilitators. Findings are used to inform adjustments and changes to Support Events such as, but not limited to, scheduling, content development, and format.

2.0 Evaluation Requirements

2.1 Key Requirements

YACC would like to undertake an evaluation of the effectiveness of its Support Events and how they serve its mission. This evaluation will help YACC refine the design, delivery, promotion and marketing of these events. It is expected that the evaluation will be conducted in 2017 to assess the results achieved to date.