

IT Volunteers Help Design New Program for Youth Facing Barriers to Employment in the ICT Sector

News Release

For Immediate Release

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Creating pathways to ICT employment and entrepreneurship for youth in Ottawa

The Social Planning Council of Ottawa is calling on techies, communications professionals, educators and young people interested in the Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) field to join us for the kick-off and “Ideathon” for the **Cowan Coding Club**, a new program to improve unemployment and under-employment of youth in Ottawa. On Tuesday, March 19 from 4:30 – 7:30 at 150 Gloucester Street, Ottawa, Ont., volunteers will come together to design the curriculum for the training sessions that form the core of the program. The launch will recognize the generous support from The Cowan Foundation, who is funding the **Cowan Coding Club** for 2019.

It’s well known that a job is the best route out of poverty, and digital skills and career-oriented networks are critical to employment success in today’s economy. However, newcomer and marginalized youth continue to face barriers in accessing entrepreneurship and employment opportunities created by Ottawa’s growing technology-driven innovation sector due to a lack of mentorship and networks. The **Cowan Coding Club** will provide 50 newcomer and marginalized young people aged 18 to 24 with critical soft and hard digital skills and career-oriented mentoring essential for success in the jobs of tomorrow.

“A main priority of The Cowan Foundation is transformative programs for youth,” explained Mary D’Alton, Executive Director, The Cowan Foundation. “In supporting this training program for marginalized youth, especially in a growing employment field, we feel this is a great step towards a future full of opportunities for participants.”

“With over 43 IT and Communications related jobs at Cowan Insurance Group across the province, and 21 of those jobs at our Ottawa office alone, we are a strong believer of empowering youth in this field,” says Heather McLachlin, President, Cowan Insurance Group. “We are pleased to support this innovative training and mentorship program for youth and are inspired by the ground-breaking work of the Social Planning Council of Ottawa, their partners and volunteers who are bringing this program to life.”

About The Social Planning Council of Ottawa

The Social Planning Council of Ottawa (SPCO) is a charity that has been a catalyst for sustainable social and economic development in Ottawa since 1928. The Cowan Coding Club builds on “Youth Active Media”, our video production program providing training and employment for youth and creative video solutions to businesses and non-profit organizations through our related social enterprise “Hot Shoe Productions”.

About Britannia Woods Community House

Over the last 30 years, Britannia Woods Community House has been offering a wide range of programs and services to improve the quality of life for multicultural families and households living on a fixed or low income in the Britannia Woods community. They will host one of the sites for the ITC curriculum in their “Sky’s the limit” space, where young people are supported to advance their own businesses and careers.

About The Cowan Foundation

The Cowan Foundation was started in 1995 in honour of Frank Cowan, the founder of Frank Cowan Company and Cowan Insurance Group. The Foundation is sustained by the ongoing success of the Princeton Holdings group of companies including Cowan Insurance Group, Frank Cowan Company, The Guarantee Company of North America, Cowan Asset Management and Fountain Street Finance. Together they provide insurance and risk management products and services for individuals, businesses, organizations and public entities, as well as assisting employers with their group benefits, retirement and health and disability management plans. The goal of The Cowan Foundation is to make a positive difference in the lives of Canadians and the broader well-being of our communities. For more information, please visit www.cowanfoundation.ca.

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Britannia Woods Community House
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