

Table of Contents

1	Authors
2	Acknowledgements
3	Contributors
4	Introduction
6	Project Overview
8	Current Challenges of LMI
10	Challenges of the Broader Ecosystem
11	Key Insights for Worker-Centric LMI
14	Imagining Worker-Centred LMI
16	Four Bold Ideas
18	Conclusion



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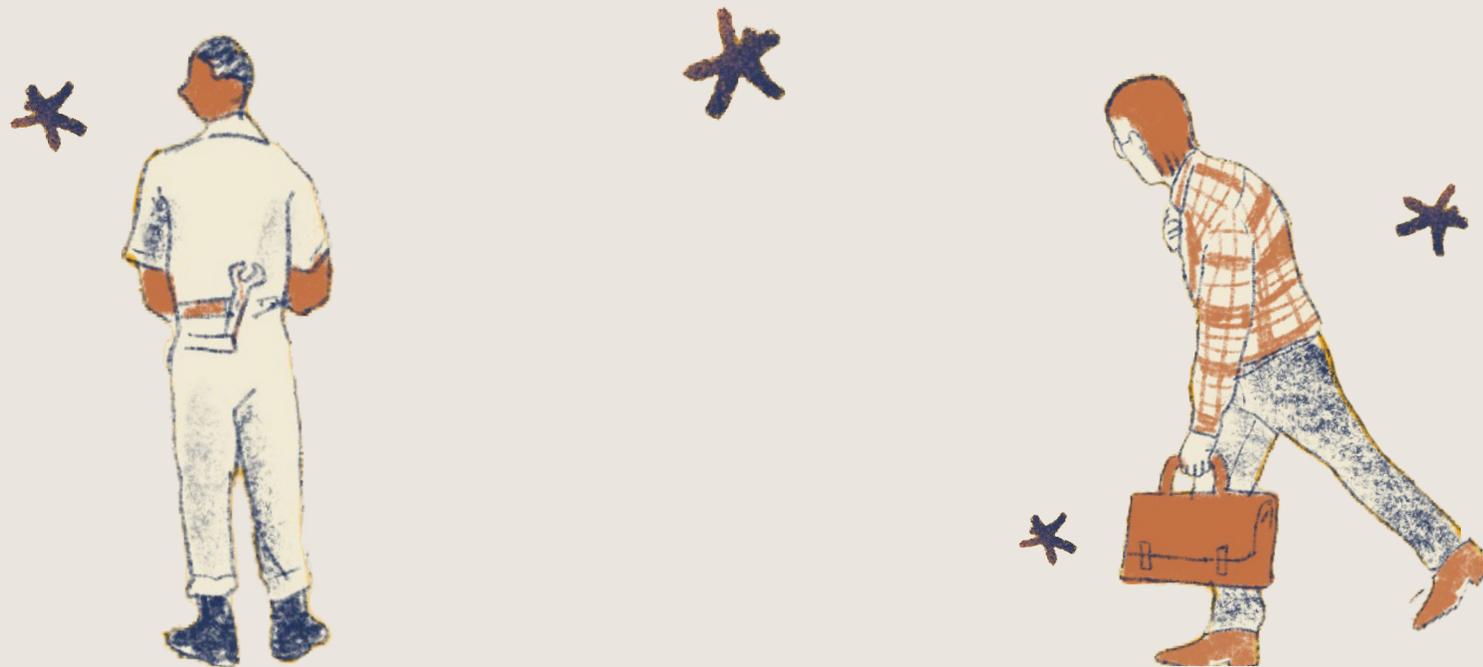
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- + LMIC
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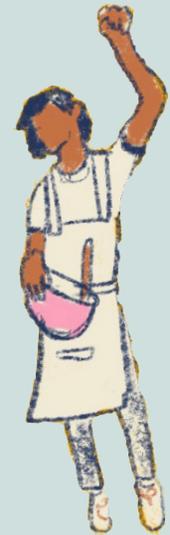
Introduction

In times of such immense change and disruption, how should workers in Canada prepare for their employment future? Is there an app for that? A skills development program? Or perhaps a new source of labour market information that can provide a roadmap for workers. This is what *Employment in 2030: Action Labs* set out to uncover: how can labour market information (LMI) be turned into practical solutions for workers and job seekers?

This project took an innovation-based approach to identify new solutions. This approach was inherently exploratory, meaning we needed to stay open-minded about what we might find. Uncovering unexpected insights was a likely outcome; however, we were not sure when or where these insights might emerge. In the end, we identified challenges and considerations of the existing LMI to make it actionable for job seekers and workers.

Why did we take an innovation-based approach?

At the Brookfield Institute for Innovation + Entrepreneurship, our mission is to transform bold ideas into real-world solutions. This mission in action means applying creative approaches to yield new insights. This project was designed to complement all existing efforts to build information, knowledge, and solutions related to Canada's skills development ecosystem. Taking an innovation-based approach was meant to enable new and novel solutions.



What do we mean by exploratory?

From the outset, we wanted to stay open-minded about the next steps and conclusions for this project. The team approach to the project and workshop design was to be flexible and iterative. In order to do that, we needed to take an “exploratory” approach to be able to test, prototype, and create space for any and all insights to emerge. This exploratory approach has led to the findings you are reading right now!

“We needed to take an ‘exploratory’ approach to be able to test, prototype, and create space for any and all insights to emerge.”



While this project was focused on translating labour market information into solutions, it is ultimately a study of the accessibility and useability of current forms of labour market information for workers. In the process of working with high schoolers, workers, educators, career practitioners, and labour market experts to convert sources of LMI into a series of conceptual prototypes that addressed their employment needs, we gained deep insight into how LMI is currently used, how people want to use it, and the challenges many have in using it.

The following summary provides an overview of these key insights gleaned from our process, a set of considerations for organizations generating LMI, and some bold ideas about how we think LMI should be redesigned to meet the needs of workers. While the broader *Employment in 2030: Action Labs* project and outputs is discussed briefly, *Ground Control to LMI: Making Labour Market Information Work for Workers* is focused on the holistic insights and a look at how we might shift to worker-centric LMI in the future. For more information about the specific process used and prototypes created, an executive summary and regional summary reports have been prepared to accompany this document ([see Quick Links](#)).



Project Overview

The Brookfield Institute's Employment in 2030 initiative used a combination of futures research, expert workshops and a machine-learning algorithm to generate the Forecast of Canadian Occupational Growth (FCOG) in 2030. The forecast was summarized in the Brookfield Institute's Ahead by a Decade report (2020). Given the Brookfield Institute's mandate to make research practical and applied, Employment in: 2030 Action Labs (herein referred to as "Action Labs") was an exploratory project designed to translate this new labour market forecast, the FCOG, in addition to other sources of LMI, into tangible solutions that could help workers prepare for their future. Given the diversity of Canada's labour market and worker experiences across the country, this project sought to generate region-specific solutions that would ideally have replicability and scalability to other contexts. To accomplish this, we partnered with five organizations:

- + Yukon University (Whitehorse, Yukon)
- + RADIUS SFU (Vancouver, British Columbia)
- + Tech Manitoba (Winnipeg, Manitoba)
- + Observatoire compétences-emplois (Montréal, Québec)
- + NL Workforce Innovation Centre, College of the North Atlantic (Corner Brook, Newfoundland and Labrador)

Action Labs included three project phases. The first phase focused on exploring the impact COVID-19 may have on Canada's labour market, and how that may impact current projections.

To do this, we conducted futures research and engaged a national panel of experts to provide feedback on emerging trends and their potential impact. This phase culminated in the release of Yesterday's Gone: Exploring the futures of Canada's labour market in a post-COVID world.

The second phase took a human-centred design approach. It involved working with our partners to identify a regional challenge area. We started with existing labour market information, including the five foundational skills highlighted in the FCOG (fluency of ideas, instruction, service orientation, persuasion and memorization), and engaged key stakeholders to identify a compelling focus area. Next, it involved conducting living expert interviews to gain a deeper understanding of the current experience of living experts, and facilitating two virtual workshops to translate the challenge into possible solutions. These challenge areas ranged from helping high school students prepare for non-linear careers, to supporting newcomer women to leverage and future-proof their existing skills, to supporting mid or late career workers in sectors that have been disrupted by COVID-19. For more details about this process, please see our workshop design commentary, and Executive Summary (see Quick Links).

What is human-centred design?

“Human-centered design is a creative approach to problem solving. It’s a process that starts with the people you’re designing for and ends with new solutions that are tailor made to suit their needs. Human-centered design is all about building a deep empathy with the people you’re designing for; generating tons of ideas; building prototypes; sharing what you’ve made with the people you’re designing for; and eventually putting your innovative new solution out in the world.”

Source: [IDEO](#)

The third and final phase focused on translating our process into LMI insights, which led to the generation of a series of considerations and ideas about how we might redesign LMI in the future to be more worker-centric. This phase is the main focus of this report. Our insights are building on the second phase which included voices from 60 workshop participants, 18 living experts, five regional partners, and other LMI experts across Canada. These conversations resulted in the foundation of this report that outlines the challenges of current LMI, challenges of the broader ecosystem, key insights, and four bold ideas to drive these insights forward.



What are the projected in-demand skills?

The Forecast of Canadian Occupational Growth (FCOG) lays out five foundational skills that are associated with occupations projected to grow by 2030.

These skills are:

Persuasion: The ability to change others’ minds and behaviours.

Fluency of ideas (brainstorming): The ability to generate a number of ideas on a topic, or to brainstorm. The number of ideas generated is important, not their quality, correctness, or creativity.

Instruction: The skills of teaching others how to do something. It can be thought of as coaching, sharing information, or training.

Memorization: The ability to remember information such as words, numbers, pictures, and procedures.

Service orientation: Actively looking for ways to help people, from customers to colleagues.



Current Challenges of LMI

At the outset of this project, the team had a series of hunches about how different regions might translate labour market information into possible solutions.

Using the Forecast of Canadian Occupational Growth, as well as other regional sources of LMI, we envisioned a series of solutions that explored how workers could develop and refine the foundational skills—persuasion, fluency of ideas, instruction, memorization, and service orientation. We thought we might hear that certain workers or job seekers would benefit from developing creativity and brainstorming skills and that, with our regional partners, we would come up with new types of training programs. This was not the case.



Working with the partners and participants in each region, we developed ideas and prototypes to benefit workers and job seekers in Canada. In the end, we developed 14 solutions that all uniquely responded to the regional challenges. Some examples of the solutions include:

- + Skills - career matching tools that could help people assess their skills and preferences and translate this information to opportunities
- + Hands-on opportunities such as internships or co-op programs for children in grades 6 to 12 as well as for late-career workers
- + Skills assessment tools that allow employers to better understand existing transferable skills
- + Training recognition and allowance initiatives
- + Additional mentorship opportunities

Many of the solutions identified through the Action Labs merit further exploration to benefit workers and job seekers in Canada. These solutions are much broader than skills-oriented training programs and incorporate the complexity of trying to prepare people for future changes in Canada's labour market. Many of the ideas may also duplicate existing programs and services; it became clear throughout this project that many programs and offerings may not be reaching the intended audiences due to a variety of factors, listed below.

At the beginning of the project, we set out to develop prototypes and solutions that would be created for further exploration. As the project progressed, we learned that existing LMI has a number of gaps that prevent it from being truly actionable for workers and job seekers.

While the development of foundational skills is important, there are challenges with LMI that need to be addressed:

+ LMI at a national level is too high-level

Participants were clear that national-level information was difficult to engage with given that each region in a province or territory has a different labour market ecosystem, with different industries and jobs where the outlook might diverge from the national forecast. Specifically in Yukon, participants and stakeholders noted several times that labour market information based on Statistics Canada data is not truly reflective of the unique Yukon labour market where there is low unemployment.

+ LMI organized by industry or occupation limits new and creative possibilities

In order to engage with existing LMI, individuals need to know what industries or occupations they might be interested in exploring. Through proposed solutions developed in Newfoundland and Labrador, job seekers were looking for new tools that might help them imagine new possibilities based on growing occupations. Many of the high school students and youth that we spoke with in Yukon and Manitoba were looking for LMI that acknowledges non-linear or non-traditional careers. They did not see themselves aligning with one occupation or industry or employer. They felt information about non-linear career paths was lacking from existing resources.

+ LMI is missing important experiential context

Through the solutions identified in Newfoundland and Labrador, Manitoba, and Yukon, youth, job seekers, and workers were looking for the realities of potential jobs, including personal stories to understand other people's experiences in that occupation, and information about the lifestyle that goes along with a specific occupation. They were also trying to find this information on social media (e.g., TikTok and YouTube), and through newsletters and podcasts.



Challenges of the Broader Ecosystem

We're living in uncertain and strange times, making it especially challenging to plan for the next year, never mind the next decade. Given the extent of disruption taking place, earlier this year, The Brookfield Institute released *Yesterday's Gone*, which explores a broad range of trends with the potential to impact Canada's labour market over the coming decade. The emerging changes cannot possibly be addressed in existing LMI, however they are still top of mind for labour market experts, as well as job seekers and workers. We observed how many of these changes are playing out in real time through the Action Labs project.

Job seekers and workers highlighted a number of emerging changes that they are paying close attention to that align to highlights reflected in the Brookfield Institute reports *Turn and Face the Strange* (2019) and *Yesterday's Gone* (2021), including:



Permanent Remote Work

Given the rise in remote work opportunities since the COVID-19 pandemic, the location of home and work may or may not be aligned. Available labour market data does not reflect the shift to remote work, and numerous project participants noted the need for updated information that reflected this significant change.

Entrepreneurial Spirit

We heard from high school students and youth that they were drawn to entrepreneurship and wanted to be their own boss instead of working long hours for a large corporation. They want to create their own path and be creative about what the future might hold.

Finding Meaning + Well-being

We heard from workshop participants and through the solutions identified that mental health and lifestyle preferences are a critical part of enabling a future-proofed workforce. In particular, this shift in values might make a four-day work week common practice, as discussed in “workaholic extinction” and shift broader expectations around productivity and job desirability.



Key Insights for Worker-Centric LMI

Based on facilitating the Action Labs in five regions, we have identified the following insights to support the future creation of worker-centred LMI. Additional background and context on these key insights and findings can be found in the individual regional reports (see [quick links](#)).

1. Workers and job seekers are looking for access to region-specific labour market information

We met with career counsellors, practitioners, teachers, students, and workers from different backgrounds who highlighted the importance of readily accessible and accurate labour market information. We heard that current LMI does not resonate with Canadian workers due to the nature of occupation-specific information and the inaccessible language used to describe occupations. Workers are looking for up-to-date career information and advice that aligns with their city and community. Participants and experts at our workshops were seeking region-specific information that accurately reflected the current labour market. Many of the participants and experts we worked with felt that most LMI was out of step with the realities in their respective communities.



2. Workers and job seekers are motivated to share ideas to improve solutions and labour market information

Job seekers and workers, when given the opportunity, have great ideas about possible solutions that meet their needs. Our workshop participants were passionate and motivated to work together on possible ideas, solutions, and interventions in order to solve a challenge in their community. During the workshop discussions, there were diverse perspectives and experiences brought to the table that greatly benefitted the quality of solutions that were brainstormed. It's difficult to know what workers and end users need without involving them directly in the process from start to finish.



3. There is a current focus on skills, but supporting individuals in navigating future labour market disruptions will require a focus on systemic challenges

Moving beyond occupations to focus on skills is the right step, but workers need broader support in order to prepare for potential disruptions. However, when we asked workers about the five foundational skills and abilities identified in the Brookfield Institute's Forecast of Canadian Occupational Growth (FCOG), most of them had identified that they already had these skills, and that their challenges were more systemic. Particularly for immigrants, refugees and newcomers, who come to Canada with significant skills, knowledge, and expertise that is not recognized in Canada. We need to be able to address barriers related to personal well-being before we can look at skills and labour demands.

Support and mentorship were important components of skills development in all of the regions we worked with, and many participants told us that systemic racism, access to quality education, access to affordable childcare, access to technology, and accessible transportation were their most significant employment challenges.

This is exacerbated by systemic issues of how LMI is collected, how it's used, and how it impacts different communities across the country, especially, immigrants, and Indigenous, Métis and Inuit communities. Before getting to skills, the bigger systemic challenges of LMI need to be addressed through systems-level change and elevating voices of organizations that are already doing this work. Specifically, we'd like to highlight the work that the First Nations Information Governance Centre is doing to bridge the First Nations data gap.



4. The skills and training ecosystem has a limited understanding of non-linear career paths

Although this is not a new insight and the Future Skills Centre has identified “responsive career pathways” as one of four key strategic priorities, we observed this challenge first hand through interviews with high school students, youth and career practitioners. Many of the high school students and youth who participated in this project were learning about careers through social media, wanted to pursue entrepreneurship and anticipated switching jobs and industries.

At the same time, high school students were being told to pursue post-secondary education if they want to be successful. Even though youth and high school students are fully aware that they will experience many different careers over their lifetime, the pathway proposed (to pursue post-secondary) is linear. Currently, social media seems to be the only platform where people are exposed to potential non-linear career paths.

5. Not everyone is able to access the available programs

There are numerous resources and supports that serve all age groups and populations across Canada. While many people are able to benefit from these supports from different initiatives and organizations, some populations get left behind. For example, in the Yukon, there are a number of resources to help youth that include high school programs, government initiatives, and other local organization supports. However, there is still an unmet need with certain youth populations not being able to get access to or benefit from these programs because of lack of access to affordable childcare, affordable and accessible technology, and accessible transportation. It is important to consider potential barriers that might inhibit participation in existing programs, and target these populations appropriately.



Imagining Worker-Centred LMI

Based on these insights, we recommend that organizations generating labour market information consider the following ideas to increase accessibility and usability for job seekers and workers:

Imagine if... We talked to job seekers and workers early in the process to understand their needs:

Worker needs vary significantly across regions, industries and stage of life. Conducting initial user research to understand the concerns, questions, and expectations of workers will strengthen the overall impact of LMI.



Imagine if...We experimented and innovated instead of getting stuck in legacy systems or structures:

Canada's labour market is changing rapidly, and LMI classification systems and frameworks struggle to keep up. For example, with advancing technology, the type of jobs in the technology sector and gig economy are growing at a rapid pace. LMI systems will constantly be behind if they don't continue to stay up to date and innovate the information they are providing to workers and job seekers. While it is important to have trusted frameworks and consistency, increased experimentation with new approaches that understand emerging changes can supplement and complement traditional LMI.

Imagine if...We tested LMI with job seekers and workers before we published:

To maximize the impact of data, it is critical to ensure LMI makes sense and is helpful to those you seek to support. For example, workers want information, but in order for LMI to be more useful for them, it needs to meet their needs and be communicated in a way they'll understand. Testing with workers in advance of release can help to refine accessible language issues, and increase the overall impact of LMI.

Imagine if... We shared LMI in a format suitable for the target audience:

Beyond language accessibility and other accessibility requirements (such as the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act -AODA), consider where LMI is being shared, and the form it is being communicated in. To ensure LMI is accessible, understand where your intended audience obtains information, and what form it should take. Consider new communication channels like social media and new formats like videos to disseminate if you seek to reach a younger audience.

Imagine if...LMI could connect to pre-existing job seekers or workers' transferable skills:

Many job seekers and workers are looking for better ways to connect their existing skills and credentials to possible new occupations and industries. It would be beneficial if LMI is able to recognize existing skills and match skills with possible growing occupations.



Four Bold Ideas

This project took an exploratory approach to translate LMI into actionable solutions. While it generated a host of potential regional solutions through workshops that are highlighted in the regional reports, it also inspired the following bold ideas to make LMI more worker-centric. While these ideas do not address every consideration identified, we look forward to working with partners to build on these ideas, and address some of these broader challenges. Each of these ideas require further development through research, prototyping, and identification of implementation partners.

Idea #1: Worker-defined occupation taxonomy

We understand the importance of National Occupational Classification codes (NOC codes), we really do. But in our current economy, how many workers actually associate with their NOC code? And when we think about new opportunities and growing industries, these will by definition not align with NOC codes. However, because NOC codes structure how some labour market information is collected and organized, it creates an inherent limitation to LMI, and reduces the accessibility or usefulness of the data for workers. To help solve this challenge, we propose a pilot initiative designed to work closely with workers to clarify how they currently self-identify, and draft a worker-defined occupation taxonomy.

Idea #2: LMI storytelling

For some workers, understanding the tasks, working environment, and compensation associated with a job is enough. As we heard from career practitioners, job seekers need stories to make new careers tangible and to understand the broader experience associated with that job. A storytelling initiative could test a variety of communication tools, such as the creation of personas for various jobs that would help workers understand “a day in the life” of someone doing that job and what the work entails. It could also mean having a translator alongside a NOC database, a handbook that accompanies the NOC codes, and a website that is nationally available and is affiliated with reputable sources of LMI data. This form of LMI could support career transitions, especially for displaced late-career workers whose identity is closely tied to their current profession, as well as those with different learning styles.



Idea #3: Futures literacy for workers

According to [UNESCO](#), futures literacy is “a universally accessible skill that builds on the innate human capacity to imagine the future and an essential competency for the twenty-first century. In our current climate, workers understand that the future is uncertain. COVID-19 has shown us that jobs that have always been secure can be disrupted. This, paired with the ongoing narrative, heard especially by youth, that jobs we will do in ten years are yet to exist, feeds into a sentiment that today’s LMI is ineffective, and quickly out of date. A pilot program for workers that is designed to develop their futures literacy could improve the ability of workers to use existing LMI, understand possible disruptive forces in their employment future, and identify what’s next.

Idea #4: Creativity training for mid- and late-career workers

Brainstorming (or, fluency of ideas), is one of the foundational skills associated with jobs projected to grow in the next 10 years (according to the FCOG), and yet we heard from career practitioners that job seekers struggle with this skill. More specifically, some job seekers have a hard time imagining themselves in new jobs. This creates another employment barrier that LMI cannot support. Brainstorming relies on our ability to be creative, yet many workers may not identify as being “creative types”. As such, we propose a skills-development program for mid- and late-career workers who do not self-identify as being creative. This program would focus on building their “creative confidence” and comfort using a range of creative problem-solving skills, including brainstorming, to both support overall employability, as well as their ability to imagine alternative career pathways.



Conclusion

Canada, like most countries, is undergoing dramatic labour market changes as a result of COVID-19, and other disruptive changes. With these significant changes, there is an opportunity to rethink how we engage and support workers to prepare for the future. Now more than ever our solutions need to reflect and meet the needs of those who will be impacted most - job seekers and workers.

Employment in 2030: Action Labs set out to translate labour market information into actionable solutions for job seekers and workers, and in doing so uncovered a host of insights about the current state of labour market information in Canada. In response to these findings, this report outlines a list of considerations for organizations that generate labour market information, as well as four big ideas about how we might improve LMI in the future. Given the inherent uncertainty of the future, our number one recommendation is that workers are put at the centre of labour market information, and closely engaged in the design and implementation of LMI through pilots and programs, evaluation and dissemination.

With the incredible amount of funding, research, and support directed towards helping job seekers and workers build skills for the future, this report aims to demonstrate the importance of putting workers at the centre.

Like many organizations generating LMI, the Brookfield Institute released the *Forecast of Canadian Occupational Growth* in 2020 with the goal of providing insight into the future skills demand in Canada. While this research uncovered useful information for policy makers, Action Labs has demonstrated the fundamental challenge of translating this LMI into practical solutions for job seekers and workers. As such, we wish to acknowledge that we ourselves, like many others, continue to reflect on how best to accomplish this goal. We look forward to continuing this work with partners, and exploring ways to improve the overall impact of LMI together.

For further reading on LMI challenges and solutions, consult [Labour Market Information in Responsive Career Pathways](#), a report produced by the Future Skills Centre and Blueprint.

Quick Links:

[Executive Summary](#)

[British Columbia Regional Summary](#)

[Manitoba Regional Summary](#)

[Newfoundland and Labrador Regional Summary](#)

[Rapport sommaire régional, Québec](#)

[Yukon Regional Summary](#)



The Brookfield Institute for Innovation + Entrepreneurship (BII+E) is an independent and nonpartisan policy institute, housed within Ryerson University, that is dedicated to building a prosperous Canada where everyone has the opportunity to thrive in an inclusive, resilient economy. BII+E generates forward-looking insights and stimulates new thinking to advance actionable innovation policy in Canada.

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