



Future Skills Centre

Final Reflections Memo

April 2022

Introduction

The Future Skills Centre (FSC) aims to strengthen Canada's skills development ecosystem to equip Canadians with the skills, knowledge, and tools they need to thrive in the future.

FSC was established in 2019 in response to the emerging global conversation about the importance of skill development, as well as the specific findings from Canada's Advisory Council on Economic Growth, which identified long-term labour market trends that will have a profound impact on the nature of work in the future, including:

- Nearly 1 in 5 Canadian employees are at risk of being replaced by a machine and have few or no options to move to lower-risk occupations unless they are retrained.
- Indigenous people, women, youth (aged 15-24) and visible minorities are disproportionately represented in the top five occupations at highest risk of automation.

Following a competitive RFP by the federal government, FSC launched in 2019 as a forward-looking organization that invests in programs to improve data and research, foster innovation and build evidence about effective approaches to skills development and training. FSC works with partners across Canada to create a more responsive, effective, and co-ordinated skills development ecosystem that provides lifelong learning opportunities. FSC takes an inclusive approach to ensure the work supports underrepresented groups. FSC is housed at Ryerson University with a core team that has grown to include over 40 staff who are complemented by the expertise of several consortium partners:



In August 2019, Ryerson University issued an RFP on behalf of FSC seeking an independent evaluator to “implement a monitoring, evaluation and learning strategy that will enable the Centre to monitor progress, make mid-course adjustments, and demonstrate results.” **Project Evident** responded to this RFP, and was ultimately selected through a competitive process to

serve as the independent evaluator helping to shape FSC's learning and improvement strategy. Project Evident harnesses the power of evidence for greater impact, offering direct services, field building, and tools and resources to help nonprofits, funders, policymakers, and public agencies strengthen the way evidence is generated and used. Project Evident believes that by empowering practitioners to drive their own evidence building and by strengthening the surrounding ecosystem, we can increase the number of effective solutions in the social sector and scale them faster—ultimately producing better, meaningful, and equitable outcomes for people and communities.

Project Evident originally proposed supporting FSC through a 2 phase process:

- **Phase One: Strategic Evidence Planning** that will result in a developmental evaluation plan, learning agenda, continuous program improvement metrics, and corresponding grantmaking strategy and capacity recommendations.
- **Phase Two: A Developmental Evaluation** that will provide FSC with the ongoing evidence to strengthen both its core operations infrastructure and its grantmaking supports and activities so that grantees and partners can continuously achieve the greatest impact for the future workforce of Canada.

Engagement Details

From February 2020 through September of 2021, Project Evident partnered with FSC to provide capacity extension and strategic evidence planning support throughout 2020, and ultimately served as a developmental evaluator through September of 2021.

Phase One: Strategic Evidence Planning (Feb 2020-Jan 2021)

Given the size and the system-level impact that FSC seeks to achieve in Canada, paired with the fact that the Centre was less than one year old and was actively operationalizing many of its functions and activities when the engagement began, Project Evident worked in close partnership with FSC throughout the engagement to continually adapt its approach to meet emergent needs. **Phase One** of Project Evident's engagement was initially planned to take six months, but ultimately took a full year due to the onset of the global pandemic, and timeline extensions and the addition of deliverables not envisioned at the outset (detailed later in this memo). Phase One included three distinct work streams, each detailed below.

1. **Work Stream 1: Implementation & Strategic Evidence Planning (February-Sept 2020)**

When Project Evident began the engagement with FSC, the first major body of work was developing an enterprise-level **Theory of Change**. While the Theory of Change conversations began at the outset of the engagement, the timeline was extended because FSC was also in the midst of a strategic planning process, and the completed strategy would serve as an important

input to the Theory of Change. Project Evident picked up the Theory of Change conversations again once the Strategic Plan was finalized and launched in April 2020.

The strategic plan focused FSC's work by identifying four strategic priorities and identifying who comprises the skills development ecosystem; Project Evident's subsequent work with FSC built from the strategic plan to increase clarity about the impact FSC expects to see in the coming three years (the end of the current funding mandate). In order to operationalize the strategy, FSC also needed an *Implementation Plan*, and elected to include that in the work with Project Evident. As such, the first major deliverable of the engagement significantly expanded in scope to become a combined **Implementation and Strategic Evidence Plan**, which Project Evident completed in September 2020.

The Implementation and Strategic Evidence Plan ultimately included:

- **A Theory of Change¹ and Logic Models** for each of the four strategic priorities, informed by consortium partners
- **Annual key performance indicators (KPIs) and 3-year outcomes** that illustrate the pathway to the long-term impact FSC envisions for Canada's skills development ecosystem
- **Strategic Evidence Building Vision and Goals** (see image below) for the FSC team, grantees, the ecosystem and policy makers and a summary of evidence-building recommendations for FSC
- **Key activities for each FSC business line** (Research & Development, Innovation Projects, Future Skills Innovation Lab, and Stakeholder Engagement & Knowledge Mobilization)
- **Data Systems & Use** current strengths and challenges, and recommendations to strengthen internal data management and analysis
- **Implementation Capacity** recommendations, including an organizational chart, responsibilities and staffing recommendations for each core team, timeline and organizational budget

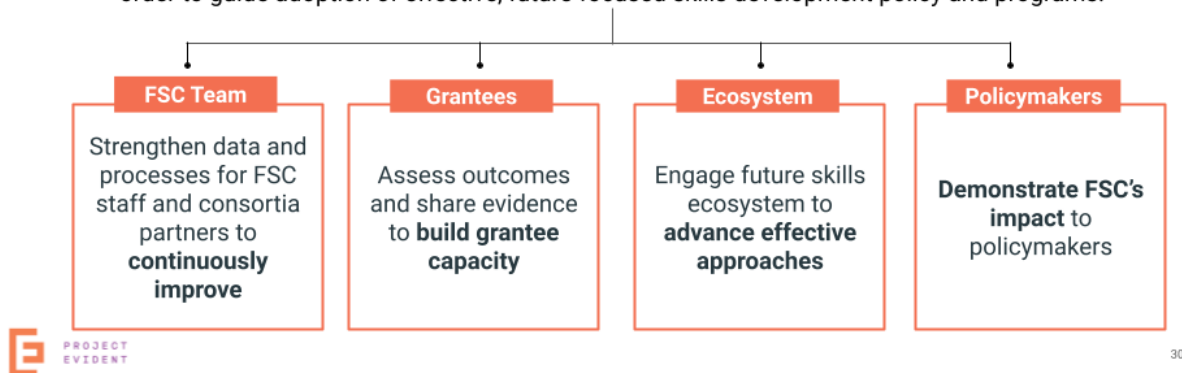
¹ The Theory of Change went through a few subsequent iterations in Phase Two of the engagement and the latest version is displayed on page 8.

Proposed Strategic Evidence Planning Objectives



THREE YEAR OBJECTIVES

By 2023, Future Skills Centre has established a strong value proposition for an ongoing investment in a "made-in-Canada 'what works' hub" using evidence to strengthen internal operations, understand grantee capacity and impact, and engage and inform the future skills ecosystem in order to guide adoption of effective, future-focused skills development policy and programs.



2. Work Stream 2: Operational Planning (Sept-Oct 2020)

As the Project Evident and FSC teams undertook the process of creating the Implementation and Strategic Evidence Plan, additional operational needs emerged that Project Evident was well-positioned to support, providing capacity extension while the FSC team was still forming. At this point FSC was rapidly releasing grants, and needed to put in place a streamlined process for evaluating how the proposals it received would help meet the organizational objectives, e.g., industry diversity, diversity of the population served, and/or regional distribution. The Project Evident team provided FSC's management team with technical support to streamline the application and review process, including creating data connections between FSC's grant application system and its own data collection. They also collaborated with the FSC management team to create reports and present key findings and trends based on applicant and rater responses, providing FSC and its steering committee with the necessary quantitative data to inform their decision making. These data points included applicant alignment to FSC's goals, rater responses and summaries, and grant size. Project Evident's technical support contributed to FSC's early development of a rigorous and data-driven grant-making process.

The Project Evident team also supported the design of the FSC Innovation Lab during this time by facilitating workshops to surface the core elements based on lessons from FSC's first year of operation, conducting a field scan of related models to further specify the core elements, and integrating the Innovation Lab into the broader **FSC Implementation and Strategic Evidence Plan** (Work Stream 1). This work resulted in the following elements being included in the Innovation Lab: Technical Assistance (including a menu of innovation/evidence support options

for projects, programming grounded in partner needs, and resources and tools for grantees); Communities of Practice (supported by an online platform, for cohorts of grantees, and focused on collaboration on shared challenges); and Challenge Hubs (convenings of stakeholders to address ecosystem challenges led by both Consortium members and others).

3. Work Stream 3: Evaluation Planning (Nov 2020-Jan 2021)

Once the Implementation and Strategic Evidence Plan was in place, and some of the priority operational needs had been addressed, the Project Evident and FSC teams transitioned into more detailed evaluation planning in November 2020. Project Evident worked with the FSC team to create a Learning Agenda to support FSC’s evaluation planning, which identified learning questions focused on decisions FSC would face over the coming 6-12 months, and potential data collection and evaluation activities to address those priority learning questions. Project Evident launched a series of Learning Cycles and quarterly workshops to analyze and interpret data, discuss meaning and insights with the FSC team, identify hypotheses and new improvements and make plans for the next opportunity to test improvements.

During this time, Project Evident also worked with FSC to document its relationship with its multiple evaluation initiatives, including the developmental evaluation:

Portfolio Evaluation	Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) Evaluation	Developmental Evaluation
<p>Key Partners: The Diversity Institute (and potentially others TBI)</p> <p>Overall purpose: Surface learning and innovations to share across the portfolio and with the field</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project-specific evidence planning, capacity building and assessment • Common outcomes • Impact evaluation for subset of projects • Learning strategy for projects that don't fit impact evaluation criteria 	<p>Key Partner: Ference & Company</p> <p>Overall purpose: Evaluation to ensure accountability to Canadian taxpayers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on Future Skills Office, Future Skills Council, + Future Skills Centre • Evaluation required during authorization of FSC 	<p>Key Partner: Project Evident</p> <p>Overall purpose: Learning and adaptation internal to FSC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational learning and feedback • Imbedded evaluators to support strategy implementation

With evaluation planning completed, the FSC and Project Evident teams wrapped up **Phase One** and were now positioned to begin the developmental evaluation.

Phase One Visual: Strategic Evidence Planning (Feb 2020-Jan 2021)

FSC Year 1 Focus: Stand up organization and staffing; initial investments

FSC Year 2 Focus: Took stock Y1; new strategic plan; more strategic investments through major grantmaking

	Q1 2020	Q2 2020	Q3 2020	Q4 2020	Q1 2021
General Planning	PE engagement begins	Initial ToC conversations Strategic Planning w/ KPMG	Implementation & Strategic Evidence Plan ★ Strategic Plan finalized, new FSC staff hired		
Operational Planning			Implementation & SEP shared w/ Adv Board Grant Mgmt System		
Evaluation Planning				★ FSC Managing Shock-proofing Funding call Evaluation Planning Exercises & Learning Agenda	

Phase 2: Developmental Evaluation (Feb-Sept 2021)

In early 2021, the Project Evident team shifted attention to the developmental evaluation, which included three primary roles:

- **Provide feedback to the FSC management team.** The Project Evident team planned quarterly memos that would provide an opportunity for reflection and to collectively take stock with the FSC team.
- **Support evolution in practices, policies and culture to become a learning organization.** FSC moved quickly in its first two years to stand up a new organization. As they shifted from grant-making to layering in learning and developing insights for the field, it was important to evolve the organizational culture and practices to support that shift.
- **Support continuous improvement in a changing context.** Project Evident captured and maintained a Learning Log of key questions to prioritize for deeper inquiry with FSC.

2021 Focus for Developmental Evaluation

FSC management identified 2021 as a pivot year where they could shift organizational energy from building up a portfolio to generating insights about promising initiatives and practices that will increase FSC's relevance within the ecosystem. This pivot to **become a knowledge hub** for the Canadian skills development field became a focus of Project Evident's developmental evaluation support; the specific topics addressed were in service of helping the FSC team

execute this pivot. In addition, in their June 2021 business plan, FSC honed in on ten “**Future Skills Breakthroughs**” to guide their work moving forward.

FUTURE SKILLS BREAKTHROUGHS		Strategic Priority: 1 2 3 4	
Ten future-focused, evidence-driven, systems-oriented initiatives to help build Canada’s future economic success			
10 BREAKTHROUGH SKILLS SOLUTIONS	NEXT STEPS 2021	X-CUTS	
3. 1. Anticipate skills innovations in Canada’s most affected economic sectors through 1 st cohort of sector-wide transformation initiatives led by employers	1. Launch of 1 st cohort in June 2021 : SMEs, Ag-tech, bio-tech, health, public admin	R E S E A R C H	E V A L U A T I O N
3. 2. Support skills innovation in northern Canada through a new northern-led roundtable to generate innovative collaborations	2. Northern-led roundtable launching in spring 2021 , funding envelope summer 2021		
2. 3. Lead a Career Pathing Innovation Initiative that will enable the testing and prototyping of transformative approaches to career advice and guidance	3. Career Pathing Innovation initiative launched; recommendations prototypes fall 2021		
1. 4. Launch a new skill-based database to support employers & career transitions	4. OpportuNext launched April 2021		
1. 5. Prototype LMI-driven approaches to career advice through a new Skills Data Hub	5. Skills Data Hub partnership under way with LMIC		
1. 6. Prototype data-driven adoption for front-line workforce development through new Practitioner Data Partnerships with community agencies	1. Practitioner Data Partnerships in contracting phase		
4. 7. Go to scale with 20% of models within FSC portfolio that are showing innovation promise	2. Launch of scaling projects in May 2021		
4. 8. Seed and support disruptive early-stage innovation projects via new Innovation Lab	1. Early-stage Innovation Lab launching summer 2021		
4. 9. Grow capacity for innovation adoption via pan-Canadian Community of Practice platform+hubs	2. Community of Practice launched in June 2020 , development of hubs over summer 2021		
10. Evolve into a Canadian Knowledge Hub on Skills Innovation leveraging FSC innovation pilots	3. Major push/investment in evaluation, thematic bulletins start rolling out in summer 2021		

From Business Plan, June 16

24

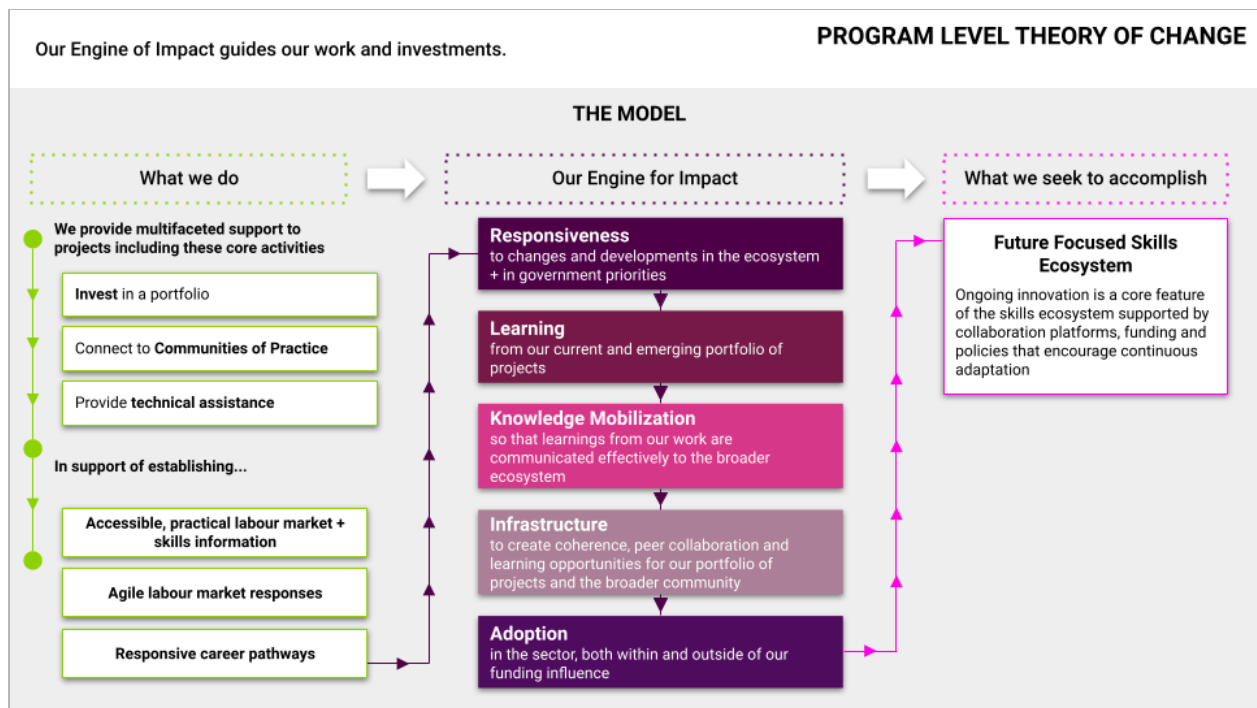
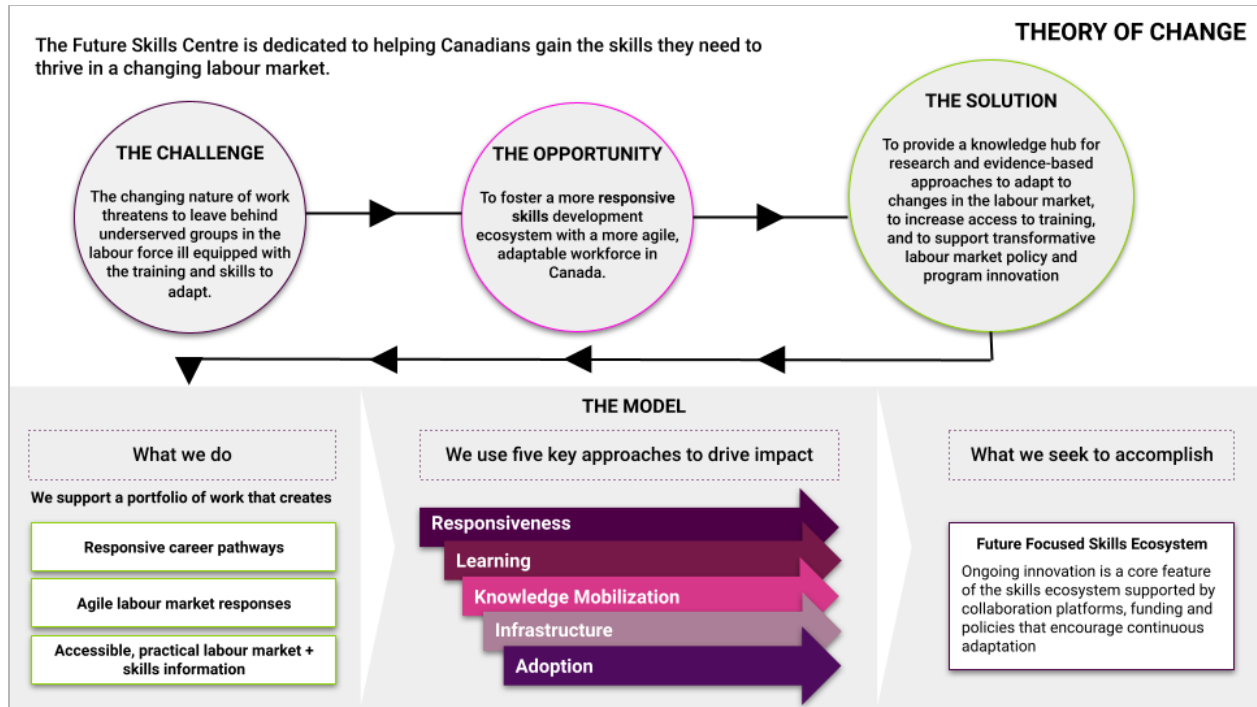
Of the ten Future Skills Breakthroughs, the FSC management team and Project Evident identified three where they needed support incorporating data and rapid cycle tests: technical assistance, the community of practice, and the sector-based strategy. Therefore, Project Evident’s 2021 developmental evaluation activities focused on two specific learning questions:

1. **How does FSC pivot from establishing a diverse, responsive portfolio and launching innovation projects to generating insights that are relevant to Canada’s skills development field?** The focus of this inquiry was on reflective exercises to take stock of which strategies were most effective, and which strategies needed to change in order to successfully make this pivot.
2. **How does FSC ensure success of the Breakthrough Initiatives?** The specific focus of this inquiry was on incorporating data and rapid cycle tests into three Breakthroughs: technical assistance, the community of practice, and the sector-based strategy.

For the first of these two questions, the Project Evident team used a mixed-method approach that included interviews, facilitated group discussions, and written reflections from FSC staff to identify themes that are summarized at the end of this memo. However, Project Evident was ultimately unable to fully engage with the Breakthrough Initiatives learning question because FSC accelerated its implementation of the initiatives, and the reflective process Project Evident originally laid out was not able to meet the pace of the new timelines.

At the beginning of **Phase Two**, Project Evident also partnered with FSC management to update the **Theory of Change** to reflect the latest shift and the priorities that will guide FSC’s work as a knowledge hub.

Theory of Change v3.1

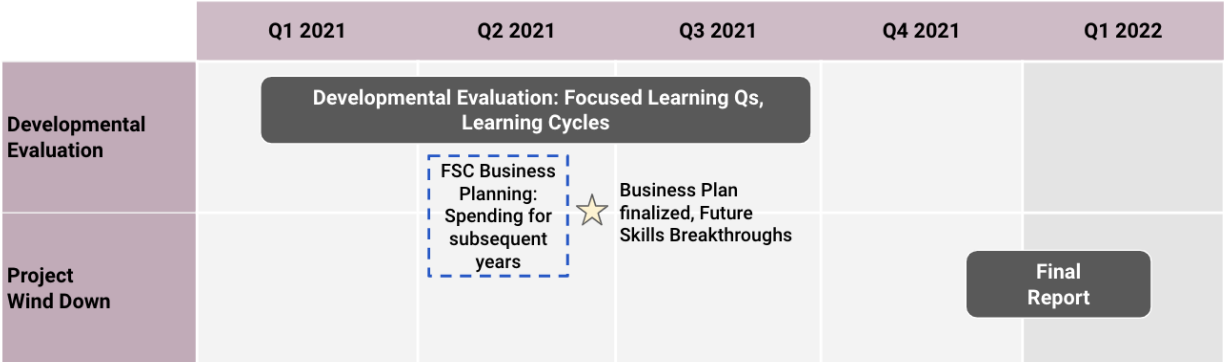


By the middle of 2021, FSC had added significant staff capacity to its internal team, including several key roles in late 2020 (including a Director of Strategy, a Director of Programs and a Director of Strategic Communications) and early 2021 (including a Chief Operating Officer and Director of Research). Once the new functional leads were fully onboarded in their roles, the FSC team took stock of their emerging needs and ultimately decided that the partnership with Project Evident – that had provided capacity extension and strategic evidence planning in **Phase One** – was no longer as useful during **Phase Two** now that they had a strong leadership team in place. As such, FSC made the decision to end its engagement with Project Evident as a developmental evaluator in October 2021.

While the **Phase Two** developmental evaluation did not proceed as planned, the capacity extension and strategic evidence planning in **Phase One** was a support to FSC during a period of rapid evolution and growth, and gave Project Evident a “front row seat” to understand what it takes to stand up a complex national organization the size of FSC. The next section of this Memo documents reflections on key themes from the partnership that will provide important context as FSC shifts to becoming a knowledge hub, finishes out the final two years of its mandate and prepares for potential renewal.

Phase Two Visual: Developmental Evaluation (Feb-Sept 2021)

FSC Year 3 Focus: Grants in the field; map 21-23 spending; shifting from grantmaking focus to development of knowledge hub.



Reflections on Key Themes

Theme 1: Complexity involved in standing up an organization the size of FSC

FSC’s vision is to support Canada to become a resilient learning nation, backed by an agile and responsive skills ecosystem that equips everyone with the skills they need to thrive in a rapidly changing economy and share in Canada’s prosperity. From the outset, FSC was founded as a forward-looking organization, deeply committed to learning and innovation even as it was establishing its early operations. FSC had a mandate to accomplish this ambitious vision in a

condensed period of time, making it a rich case study for what it takes to efficiently and effectively stand up an organization the size and complexity of FSC.

One of the most important aspects of FSC's approach to standing up their organization is the consortium design, leveraging the networks and strengths of three existing institutions to enable the initiative to hit the ground running and accelerate their impact on the skills development ecosystem. Ryerson, as the lead host organization for FSC, provided an immediate operational backbone for functions like finance, HR, facilities, and ICT support. It also ensured governance and reporting functions were in place from the beginning. This allowed FSC to move quickly to a focus on strategy and partnerships. The consortium partnership proved to be a contrast from other more traditional approaches; FSC's selection was a signal that the Government of Canada was compelled by their more "disruptive" model to address the significant future skills challenge. The next section of this Memo includes additional reflections specific to the consortium approach.

FSC and its consortium partners were committed to learning from peers as they got up and running – specifically other Pan-Canadian government-funded initiatives of similar complexity and scale – to ensure they could proactively replicate and build from their successes, while also avoiding their pitfalls and mistakes. A few clear learnings from these other initiatives included 1) the importance of authentically involving all provinces and territories in the initiative, to address those who are skeptical of federal control (given skills, education and training are led locally); 2) the urgency of making initial investments quickly, to both establish FSC's presence and influence on the ecosystem, and accelerate the learning process; 3) the necessity of carefully balancing centralization with regionalization to ensure both clarity of purpose and broad and inclusive reach; and 4) the importance of having a well organized and cohesive research and evaluation program.

Despite FSC's innovative consortium approach and intentional learning from peer initiatives early on, they nonetheless faced the ongoing tension of needing to deliver results quickly while also trying to learn and innovate. A recurring theme in the early years was trying to "run quickly while also making the time to look around while running so you can get better and faster" (Fiona Deller, COO). FSC responded to this dynamic in two important ways: leveraging external capacity support from outside partners (including Project Evident), and seeking and responding to regular feedback from those partners.

FSC differs from other similar initiatives in how substantially it leveraged consultant support in the early years. Arguably, securing this additional flexible capacity enabled FSC to accelerate its early progress, developing a Strategic Plan, an Implementation & Strategic Evidence Plan, a robust and data-driven Grants Management System and a Financial Model *at the same time* they were still hiring their team and developing their internal operations. Moreover, FSC's leadership team was deeply committed to learning from these outside partners – actively soliciting and

responding to their feedback. Because of this reflective practice, each new phase of work was immediately more strategic than the last – allowing for the team to rapidly move from reflection and learning, to hypothesizing and planning, to taking new action.

Where FSC is Today: Key Markers Related to Theme 1

- **BREADTH.** FSC has launched more than 140 projects focused on innovation in skills development, including projects touching 20 of 28 economic sectors, reaching populations in every province and territory, and led by organizations in 10 out of 13 provinces and territories.
- **ADOPTION:** FSC is already scaling a portion of its portfolio. In the spring of 2021, FSC committed investments to scale or expand an initial cohort of 10 projects, and developed a scaling playbook to support future work including a targeted funding call for its more mature projects. There is also emerging evidence of adoption of elements of FSC projects across the skills development ecosystem (e.g. the Tourism sector).
- **VALUE FOR MONEY.** FSC has effectively stewarded public funds (three clean audits and zero compliance issues), developed efficient operating costs (9%) and leveraged significant resources from project and consortium partners (\$79 million in-kind contributions).

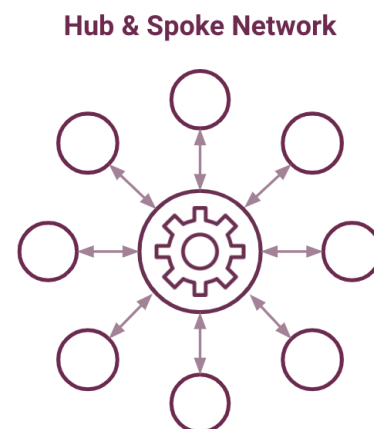
Theme 2: The unique approach of the consortium model

As noted above, FSC's consortium model has been an important component of their value proposition to the Government of Canada. By leveraging the networks, credibility and capacity of three existing institutions, they had immediate relevance in the skills development ecosystem and were able to launch investments, projects and a research agenda that would have taken an independent start-up venture more time to accomplish. FSC was able to launch a set of Regional Soundings Tours across every province and territory in Canada² – kicking off immediately in the first year – because of the Conference Board's existing national network, and used those tours to shape their early investments and a research agenda with a volume and scope they could never have achieved without their consortium partners. Blueprint's expertise in evidence-based innovation was central in the design of strategic priorities for the Centre (completed in year one), particularly in the area of career pathing. Thanks to the extensive research networks and thought leadership of Ryerson's Diversity Institute, FSC was able to move quickly to launch a research series on the Future of Work and Skills (Skills Next) – fourteen

² FSC's two Pan-Canadian Regional Soundings Tours made stops in 25 communities in every province and territory with more than 1,500 participants.

reports with a range of partners were published in the first year of the Centre. Ryerson’s Magnet, with an extensive and deep network of partners in post-secondary institutions and among employer and industry groups, was instrumental in connecting key stakeholders to FSC’s early work. The variety of types of institutions in the consortium was also key to their success, enabling them to learn from each other and become nimbler and more adaptive than any of them might have been working in isolation.

It was also challenging for FSC leadership to coordinate the partners and get to strategic alignment in larger group conversations. After testing a number of different approaches to managing the consortium, FSC determined that a “hub and spoke” governance model had the greatest opportunity to be effective. In this model, FSC staff served as the hub or “mothership” tasked with *ensuring alignment* of each of the partner spokes, to ensure the work was coordinated and moving forward as a fully functioning wheel. While the hub-and-spoke has proven effective, it does require staff at the FSC hub to spend significant time engaging partners and has the ongoing risk of misunderstandings due to information flows. As FSC pivots to becoming a knowledge hub and prepares for the future, it will be critical for the management team to continue reflecting on the following questions:



- How does FSC most effectively partner with consortium members to achieve their shared goals?
- How can FSC best support the agendas of its diverse consortium partners, when they are not the lead organization?
- What is FSC’s unique role as the connective hub for the consortium?

Where FSC is Today: Key Markers Related to Theme 2:

- **POPULATION REACH.** More than 10,000 participants have received skills training through innovation pilots so far, while 40% of pilots feature employer leadership with more than 1,000 employers engaged.
- **POLICY RELEVANCE.** FSC is working collaboratively with policy makers in provincial and territorial governments to ensure results are relevant to policy and program development at the systems level.
- **CHAMPIONS.** FSC has built a strong network of partners who are champions of their work: from experts and academics, to education

and skills providers, employers and labour, as well as policy makers at various levels of government.

Theme 3: Ongoing focus on evaluation and evidence-building

From the beginning, FSC has strived to be “evidence-driven in advancing systemic and disruptive solutions based on applied research, on-the-ground experimentation, and rigorous evaluation.” (Renewal Framework, October 2021). As previously noted, Project Evident worked with FSC to document and clarify its three-pronged evaluation and evidence-building strategy at the end of Phase One of the engagement: **1) Portfolio Evaluation** (Diversity Institute); **2) ESDC Evaluation** (FERENCE & COMPANY); and **3) Developmental Evaluation** (Project Evident) – see summary table on page five.

Through each of these three investments in evaluation and evidence-building, FSC has shown a level of commitment to learning and reflective practice (also noted in Theme One). Their choice to bring in a developmental evaluator alongside their portfolio evaluation work and the statutory evaluation demonstrates their orientation to innovation and continuous learning. Even as they were still building their team and internal operations, FSC was committed to doing a Strategic Evidence Planning process in Phase One so they could have concrete measures in place to assess their effectiveness as an organization. The Learning Log they developed alongside Project Evident in Phase Two is also a tangible artifact representing this commitment, and the management team was very committed to working through these questions with Project Evident and their broader team.

In addition to their three-pronged investment in evaluation, FSC also has a separate research agenda that is one of its core activities and evidence-building strategies. One of FSC’s key learnings when analyzing the efficacy of peer initiatives similar to FSC in size, mandate and scope was the importance of making a significant investment in research, and they have delivered on that insight. FSC has strived to become a thought leader in the future skills ecosystem, and their research agenda aims to help a broad base of Canadian stakeholders – including current and future job-seekers, employers, policymakers, service providers, educators, and researchers – to better understand future skills priorities, knowledge gaps and best practices. They have many collaborators involved in carrying out their research agenda, starting with their consortium partners and including all levels of government, additional research institutions, subject matter experts, and diverse stakeholders. Together, FSC’s evaluation work and their ambitious research strategy position it to become a knowledge hub generating insights for the skills-development ecosystem.

Where FSC is today: Key Markers Related to Theme 3

- **SKILLS INNOVATIONS.** FSC is providing leadership on ten future-focused, evidence-driven Breakthroughs for Skills Innovation.
- **INSIGHTS.** FSC has built a Knowledge Hub product pipeline to deliver insights from FSC projects; published more than 92 reports with research insights with Ryerson's Diversity Institute and The Conference Board of Canada; funded and actively supported partners with technical assistance, evaluation, evidence-generation, insights, and knowledge mobilization.

Theme 4: Challenges and adaptations arising from the pandemic

It is important to both acknowledge and reflect on the impact of the global pandemic on FSC's early years – it required flexibility and adaptation at every level, including FSC as an organization, as well as the work with the consortium and their grantees. Not only was it operationally challenging to become a pan-Canadian entity in a time of no travel, but the skills ecosystem also faced unprecedented challenges due to Covid that had disproportionate effects on particular sectors of the workforce.

FSC actively responded to both the operational and systemic challenges. After quickly adjusting to a remote work environment, FSC moved forward with its Regional Sounding tours in 2020 with minimal delay and ultimately leveraged technology and the broad networks of their consortium partners to organize a higher volume of convenings across the provinces than originally envisioned, including more than 1,500 participants in 25 communities in every province and territory. Moreover, the FSC leadership team was able to have a greater presence at these convenings because they could attend events in geographically distant locations without taking time to travel. The volume and significant geographic reach of the Regional Soundings Tours directly helped position FSC to achieve Pan-Canadian reach with its investment strategy – a notable achievement in the midst of a global pandemic.

FSC also was nimble and adaptive in responding to the changes to the skills ecosystem brought on by the pandemic, shifting their attention and resources via a "shockproofing call," which tapped the ecosystem to learn from the real-time shifts that were being made during the pandemic for future adaptation. They also quickly ramped up sector-specific strategic initiatives, starting with a provincial pilot in the hospitality industry – by far the hardest hit from an employer and worker perspective – to create new digital infrastructure for training that would have lasting effects. That pilot scaled nationally within a year. FSC's approach and speed to making these programmatic shifts position it for continued learning and adaptation as FSC

prepares for the coming years and a skills ecosystem that will continue to shift and evolve with the ongoing challenges of the pandemic.

Where FSC is today: Key Markers Related to Theme 4

- **PAN-CANADIAN PRESENCE.** FSC now has projects reaching populations in every province and territory: 28 projects are Pan-Canadian and another 37 are multi-jurisdictional.
- **INCLUSION.** Within the pilots portfolio a significant number of projects have focused on addressing diverse populations (e.g. 75% serve underrepresented and disadvantaged groups), and diverse stakeholder support runs wide and deep across their portfolio of projects.

Looking Forward

FSC's efforts over the past two years, including the engagement with Project Evident, has positioned them for their next chapter. Through both the Implementation and Strategic Evidence Planning in Phase One, and the Developmental Evaluation in Phase Two, Project Evident provided capacity extension, technical and strategic support at a critical time in FSC's early evolution. Now that FSC has a clear Theory of Change, a thorough Implementation and Strategic Evidence Plan, strong operational systems, clear metrics to measure their effectiveness – and a robust internal team in place to lead the work – they are well-poised to achieve the goals of their current mandate and continue delivering value to Canada long into the future.