

# Advanced Digital and Professional Training (ADaPT)

Interim Status Report

March 2024

**Blueprint**

This report was produced as part of a project funded by the Future Skills Centre (FSC), with financial support from the Government of Canada's Future Skills Program.

FSC is a forward-thinking centre for research and collaboration dedicated to preparing Canadians for employment success. We believe Canadians should feel confident about the skills they have to succeed in a changing workforce. As a pan-Canadian community, we are collaborating to rigorously identify, test, measure, and share innovative approaches to assessing and developing the skills Canadians need to thrive in the days and years ahead. The Future Skills Centre was founded by a consortium whose members are Toronto Metropolitan University, Blueprint ADE, and The Conference Board of Canada

The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Future Skills Centre or the Government of Canada.



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# Acknowledgements

## About the Future Skills Centre

The [Future Skills Centre](#) (FSC) is a forward-thinking centre for research and collaboration dedicated to preparing Canadians for employment success. We believe Canadians should feel confident about the skills they have to succeed in a changing workforce.

As a pan-Canadian community, we are collaborating to rigorously identify, test, measure and share innovative approaches to assessing and developing the skills Canadians need to thrive in the days and years ahead.

The FSC was founded by a consortium whose members are Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU), Blueprint and the Conference Board of Canada, and is funded by the [Government of Canada's Future Skills Program](#).

## About Blueprint

[Blueprint](#) was founded on the simple idea that evidence is a powerful tool for change. We work with policymakers and practitioners to create and use evidence to solve complex policy and program challenges. Our vision is a social policy ecosystem where evidence is used to improve lives, build better systems and policies and drive social change.

Our team brings together a multidisciplinary group of professionals with diverse capabilities in policy research, data analysis, design, evaluation, implementation and knowledge mobilization.

At the Future Skills Centre, Blueprint works with partners and stakeholders to collaboratively generate and use evidence to help solve pressing future skills challenges.

## About the Scaling Up Skills Development Initiative

This work is part of the FSC and Blueprint **Scaling Up Skills Development Portfolio**, which aims to strengthen Canada's skills development ecosystem by providing investment, technical assistance and evidence support to help scale a diverse portfolio of innovative skills projects. Through the initiative, FSC granted \$25.9 million to nine different programs, one of which is ADaPT.

For more information about the Scaling Up Skills Development Portfolio and the progress of the other eight projects, please refer to the [Scaling Design Report](#).



# Preface

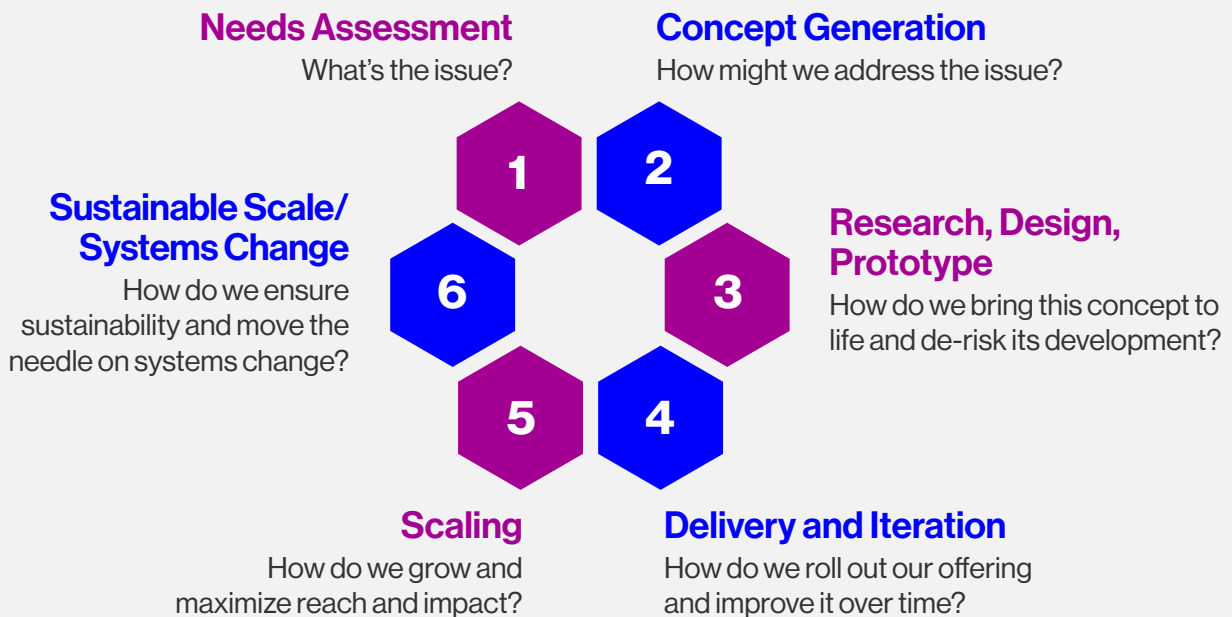
Canada’s labour market is rapidly changing. To keep pace with these changes, Canadians need skills development opportunities that respond to demands and apply best practices. Many skills development innovations have emerged to meet these needs, but they often face barriers to scaling their interventions beyond a pilot stage.

To address this challenge, the FSC and Blueprint launched the **Scaling Up Skills Development Portfolio**.

In the [Scaling Up Skills Development Portfolio](#), FSC partnered with 10 organizations with promising skills development interventions that began scaling up their impact. As part of the FSC consortium, Blueprint is working closely with each grantee organization to generate evidence to support their scaling journey. This is an opportunity to disrupt the current “one study at a time” approach to evidence-building in favour of continuous evidence generation and program improvement. The hope is that this approach will better produce the quality and quantity of evidence needed to help promising interventions progress in their scaling journey. For more information about Blueprint’s approach to scaling, see our [Scaling Social Innovation](#) webpage.

Blueprint’s evidence generation approach is aligned with the six-stage innovation cycle (**Figure 1**). Our focus for the Scaling Portfolio is to work alongside partner organizations to generate evidence that helps move their interventions through **Stage 4** to **Stage 5**, with the ultimate goal of supporting sustainable scale and systems change (**Stage 6**).

**Figure 1** | Innovation Cycle



# About this report

Blueprint is working with each partner organization in the [Scaling Up Skills Development Portfolio](#) to continuously collect and monitor data about their intervention, capturing implementation and participant outcomes along the scaling journey.

This report provides an update on the Advanced Digital and Professional Training (ADaPT) project funded by FSC. It includes information on program enrolment, delivery and data collection between October 2021 and December 2023. ADaPT is a sector-based training model that enables post-secondary education (PSE) graduates from diverse backgrounds to enter the IT sector. The model responds to the disconnect between the skills and talent needs of the IT sector and the skills of PSE graduates, as assessed by both employers and graduates themselves. This model is undergoing an impact evaluation through a randomized controlled trial (RCT) to generate rigorous evidence of its impact.

Once the sample size is large enough, we will report findings on outcomes and impact in a follow-up report.

This report is organized into four sections:

- **Section 1: About ADaPT** (pgs. 6–7) presents an overview of the ADaPT model, including program structure, delivery locations and partner organizations.
- **Section 2: Methodology** (pgs. 8–10) shares Blueprint’s evidence generation approach, learning agenda and data sources used in studying the ADaPT project.
- **Section 3: Interim Status** (pgs. 11–15) shares information on program recruitment, research consent, survey completion and cohort delivery for all planned cohorts.
- **Section 4: Summary** (pg. 16) provides a brief summary and outlines next steps.

# 1. About ADaPT

Delivered by the Diversity Institute (DI) of Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU) and TECHNATION, ADaPT is a sector-based model designed to improve the digital and professional skills of PSE graduates and final-semester students, with a focus on those from non-STEM backgrounds and equity-seeking groups.<sup>1</sup>

It provides nine weeks (70+ hours) of free, intensive skills training in topics such as digital literacy, communications, research and business financials and includes optional boot camps and paid work-integrated learning placements. It also provides wraparound supports, including job search support, to assist participants in obtaining entry-level digital roles; engages employers to understand their hiring needs and the strategies, policies and processes for creating an inclusive work environment for equity deserving groups; and connects participants to job openings.

ADaPT is offered in a variety of modes: face-to-face, a virtual classroom (synchronous) stream, an online (asynchronous) stream and in a blended format. ADaPT also offers the program in different versions. The “core” version covers a broad range of digital and professional skills topics. Other versions offer curriculums tailored for specific populations, skills and roles.

The focus of this report is the FSC-funded ADaPT project. In 2019, FSC provided a grant to DI and TECHNATION to deliver ADaPT. In 2021, ADaPT was selected as one of [10 interventions](#) to be included in the [Scaling Up Skills Development Portfolio](#) due to its potential to meet Canada’s pressing skills needs, its feasibility to scale and its high levels of service demand and participant satisfaction. The diagram in **Appendix A** maps the participant journey and target outcomes.

Given the impact of COVID-19 and disruption of face-to-face program delivery, the FSC evaluation shifted to focus on the job seeker portion of the programming<sup>2</sup> offered in two modes: 1) a virtual classroom (synchronous) stream, and 2) an online (asynchronous) stream, both with wraparound supports (for more details, see Appendix B), compared to a control group offering access to LinkedIn Learning only.

In its current FSC scaling phase, the program expanded beyond its original delivery locations of Toronto, Halifax and Calgary to include Vancouver/Lower Mainland. It also expanded its offerings to include a version of the program tailored to the needs of newcomers to help them navigate the Canadian IT job market. See **Box 1** for details about the project partners and their roles and locations.

1 Equity-seeking groups include Indigenous persons, racialized minorities, members of the LGBTQ2S+ community, persons with disabilities and women.

2 For the other variants of ADaPT not funded by FSC, the evaluation may focus on the impact of the demand side of the programming for employers.

## | **Box 1** | ADaPT Partner Organizations

### **Program leads**

- [DI of TMU](#): DI conducts and coordinates multi-disciplinary, multi-stakeholder research to address the needs of diverse Canadians, the changing nature of skills and competencies, and the policies, processes and tools that advance economic inclusion and success. DI leads and executes the design and delivery of ADaPT programming for job seekers and employers and wraparound supports.
- [TECHNATION](#): Uniting Canada's technology sector, governments and communities for Canada's future, TECHNATION champions Canada's technological future by helping to facilitate and enable the tech industry and government to work together to grow and evolve with new technology. TECHNATION contributes to ADaPT participant recruitment, employer engagement and management and oversight of its instructors.

### **Post-secondary institution training partners**

The following partners assist DI in the delivery of ADaPT in specific regions outside of Ontario by helping source local instructors, facilitate recruitment, engage employers, and beyond:

- [Saint Mary's University \(SMU\)](#) helps deliver the program in the Atlantic region.
- [Southern Alberta Institute of Technology \(SAIT\)](#) facilitated delivery of ADaPT in Alberta (this partnership concluded in summer 2022).
- [Mount Royal University \(MRU\)](#) helps deliver the program in Alberta (this partnership began in summer 2022).
- [Simon Fraser University \(SFU\)](#) helps deliver ADaPT in British Columbia (this partnership began in the fall 2022).

### **Bootcamp partner**

- [Jelly Academy](#) delivers the Digital Marketing bootcamp.



# 2. Methodology

## 2.1 Learning agenda

To support the scaling up of promising interventions, Blueprint developed a novel approach to evidence generation that fits within the six stages of the innovation cycle (see pg. 4). More details on our evidence generation approach can be found in the [Scaling Design Report](#).

Like all other interventions in the Scaling Portfolio, the ADaPT core model is in Stage 4 of the innovation cycle, **Delivery and Iteration**. Stage 4 is further broken down into three levels of delivery maturity: (4a) Implement, (4b) Improve, and (4c) Prove. Because ADaPT has been delivered for a sustained period with evidence of success and the model has been relatively stabilized, we categorized it at Stage 4c, 'Prove,' where evidence generation is focused on long-term outcomes and impact evaluation.

Blueprint designed an evidence-generation plan to investigate the following five areas. Findings in these areas will be presented in the final report.

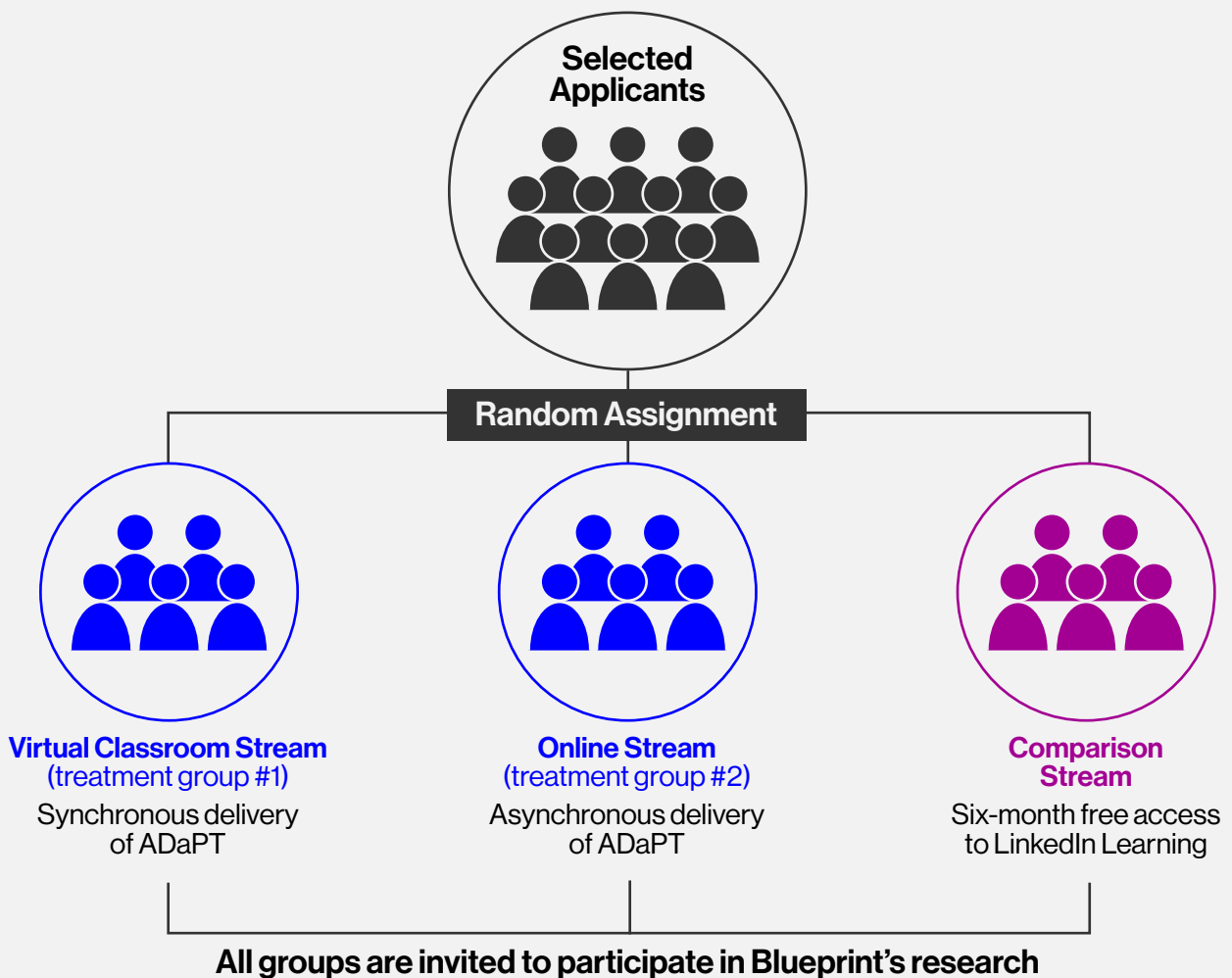
- **Implementation.** Is the model implemented with fidelity? What adaptations were made across sites and contexts? What challenges and successes occurred during program delivery? What resources are required for successful implementation?
- **Reach and completion.** Is the program reaching its target population? Do participants complete programming?
- **Participant experience.** Are participants satisfied with the program? What do they see as its strengths and areas for improvement?
- **Participant outcomes.** Do participants show improvement in their digital and professional skills targeted by the program? What labour market and education outcomes do participants achieve? How do these outcomes vary across participants?
- **Program impact.** Do treatment group participants have better outcomes than the comparison group participants? How does this impact vary across participants and program streams?

Twenty ADaPT core curriculum cohorts were delivered between fall 2021 and winter 2023. The first two were not included in the impact evaluation due to delays in gaining approval for the RCT from TMU's Research Ethics Board (REB). These two cohorts are referred to throughout this report as "pre-RCT cohorts" and do not include an analysis of impact. As this project is also testing model effectiveness with newcomers, evidence generation for this cohort is aligned with Stage 4a, 'Implement,' of the innovation cycle. Our focus is on collecting data to support program implementation and therefore also excludes an analysis of impact.

## 2.2 Research design

Our impact evaluation is designed to understand whether participation in ADaPT causes favourable employment outcomes. We use an RCT design, in which selected applicants are randomized into one of the three groups: i) the virtual classroom (synchronous) stream (treatment group #1); ii) the online (asynchronous) stream (treatment group #2); and iii) a comparison group in which participants have six months of free access to LinkedIn Learning without access to ADaPT programming or wraparound supports (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2** | ADaPT RCT Randomization Process



## 2.3 Data sources

Table 1 shows participant data collection sources.

**Table 1 | Data Sources**

<b>Baseline survey</b>	To capture participant socio-demographic characteristics, perceived skills and employment and education status and history
<b>Exit survey</b>	To capture participant program satisfaction (not for the comparison group), perceived skills and employment and education status
<b>Follow-up surveys</b>	To capture participant employment and education status
<b>Participant interview</b>	To capture program experience and satisfaction through semi-structured interviews with selected participants of selected cohorts
<b>Staff focus group</b>	To capture program implementation details through semi-structured focus groups with program staff and partners
<b>Administrative data</b>	To gather program acceptance and completion data collected and shared by DI
<b>Data linkage</b>	To track participants' long-term employment and education outcomes through Statistics Canada's social data linkage

# 3. Interim Status

## 3.1 RCT cohorts

### Cohort delivery

DI planned 18 RCT cohorts for delivery between October 2021 and December 2023. As of December 31, 2023, all planned RCT cohorts were successfully launched and completed. An additional four RCT cohorts will be delivered in 2024 to ensure there is a large enough sample size to conduct the impact analysis.

### RCT enrolment and research consent

Selected applicants were randomly assigned to one of the three experimental groups as part of the admissions process. We set a target of 600 consenting research participants (200 per experimental group) to ensure we achieved a sample size with enough statistical power to conduct the impact analysis. Since not all applicants selected for the program consent to the research, we determined that a minimum of 800 selected applicants would be needed to attain the target of 600.

As of December 31, 2023, 1,093 individuals were randomly assigned to one of the three groups. This exceeded our target of 800. Our research consent targets were also exceeded, as 812 individuals consented to the research overall, and over 200 consented in each experimental group.

### Survey completion

We identified a target of 600 (200 per experimental group) for completing each survey. As shown in Table 2, as of December 31, 2023, the project had not yet met its targets for exit or follow-up survey completions,<sup>3</sup> but we expect to meet these targets in 2024 once the additional cohorts are delivered.<sup>4</sup>

To maximize participation in our research and surveys, we plan to implement a new model of consent for these cohorts. Applicants will opt in to the research by default as part of the program admissions process (with the option to later opt out of research activities they do not wish to participate in). Implementing this new model of consent is contingent on timely approval by TMU's REB.

3 The average survey completion rate thus far ranged from 65% to 70% across cohorts and surveys, which was lower than initially expected.

4 Selected applicants had the opportunity to consent post-randomization to boost the consent rate. However, this introduced the possibility that participant characteristics could be related to their experimental group in a way that could bias effect estimates. To mitigate this, we will remove those who consented post-randomization from the analysis in the final report. This will lower the sample sizes but not significantly, and we expect the targets can still be met under the FSC extension.

**Table 2 | Data Sources and Sample Sizes — RCT Cohorts**

<b>RCT Data Sources and Sample Sizes</b> • <b>Actual</b> (as of Dec. 31, 2023) • <b>Projected*</b> (by the end of FSC extension)		<b>Comparison</b>	<b>Online</b>	<b>Virtual</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Target</b>
<b>Selected Applicants — Admin Data</b> (number of qualified applicants entered into randomization)	<b>Actual</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>366</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>1093</b>	<b>800</b>
	<b>Projected</b>	<b>511</b>	<b>512</b>	<b>508</b>	<b>1531</b>	
<b>Consent to Research/ Baseline Survey</b> (out of selected applicants)	<b>Actual</b>	<b>240/365</b> (66%)	<b>291/366</b> (80%)	<b>281/362</b> (78%)	<b>812/1093</b> (74%)	<b>600</b> (with 200 per group)
	<b>Projected</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>410</b>	<b>396</b>	<b>1143</b>	
<b>Consent to Data Linkage**</b> (out of selected applicants)	<b>Actual</b>	<b>216/365</b> (59%)	<b>269/366</b> (73%)	<b>252/362</b> (70%)	<b>737/1093</b> (67%)	
	<b>Projected</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>374</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>1031</b>	
<b>Exit Survey</b> (out of consenting selected applicants)***	<b>Actual****</b>	<b>125/202</b> (62%)	<b>190/246</b> (77%)	<b>173/254</b> (68%)	<b>488/702</b> (70%)	
	<b>Projected</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>794</b>	
<b>Three-month Follow-up Survey***</b>	<b>Actual****</b>	<b>130/202</b> (64%)	<b>165/246</b> (67%)	<b>159/254</b> (63%)	<b>454/702</b> (65%)	
	<b>Projected</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>740</b>	
<b>Nine-month Follow-up Survey</b> (out of consenting selected applicants)***	<b>Actual****</b>	<b>54/84</b> (64%)	<b>74/103</b> (72%)	<b>55/94</b> (59%)	<b>183/281</b> (65%)	
	<b>Projected</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>745</b>	

**Notes:**

\* Each projected sample size (except the projected numbers of selected applicants) was calculated by using the actual consent or survey completion rate in the cell above, with the assumption that these rates will remain stable moving forward.

\*\* Consent to the overall research and consent to the data linkage are two separate forms as requested by TMU's REB.

\*\*\* Consenting selected applicants refer to those who consented to research, not data linkage.

\*\*\*\* Some of the RCT cohorts delivered in 2023 hadn't had the opportunity to complete the survey yet, but the denominator shows the number who had already been invited.

## 3.2 Pre-RCT cohorts

### Cohort delivery

Two ADaPT core curriculum cohorts were planned for delivery before the launch of the RCT. Recruitment for these cohorts proceeded as planned with minimal challenges. Applicants could indicate a preference for one of the two streams (i.e., virtual or online), which recruitment staff considered when assigning streams for those selected. As of December 31, 2023, the two pre-RCT cohorts were successfully launched and completed.

### Research consent

As shown in Table 3, consent rates for these cohorts were relatively high, with 74% consenting to the evaluation overall and 67% consenting to Statistics Canada data linkage.

### Survey completion

As shown in Table 3, all survey data collection (including nine-month surveys) was also complete as of December 31, 2023. Survey response rates ranged from 46% (for the nine-month survey) to 78% (for the exit survey), with rates decreasing over time. Because only two pre-RCT cohorts were delivered, sample sizes for these cohorts are small (with 31 to 52 responses depending on the survey).

**Table 3 | Data Sources and Sample Sizes — Pre-RCT Cohorts**

Data Sources and Sample Sizes (As of Dec. 31, 2023)	Pre-RCT Cohorts		
	Online	Virtual	TOTAL
Program Enrolment — Admin Data	44	46	90
Consent to Research/ Baseline Survey	35/44 (80%)	32/46 (70%)	67/90 (74%)
Consent to Data Linkage	29/44 (66%)	31/46 (67%)	60/90 (67%)
Exit Survey	24/35 (69%)	28/32 (88%)	52/67 (78%)
Three-month Follow-up Survey	19/35 (54%)	23/32 (72%)	42/67 (63%)
Nine-month Follow-up Survey	19/35 (54%)	23/32 (72%)	42/67 (63%)

### 3.3 Newcomer cohort

#### Cohort delivery

Similar to the pre-RCT cohorts, applicants of the newcomer cohort could also indicate a preference for one of the two streams (i.e., virtual or online), which recruitment staff considered when assigning streams for those selected. As of December 31, 2023, the newcomer cohort was delivered as planned and completed as scheduled.

#### Research consent

As shown in Table 4, 61% of participants consented to the evaluation overall and Statistics Canada data linkage, respectively, which were slightly lower than those for the pre-RCT cohorts.

#### Survey completion

As shown in Table 4, all survey data collection (including nine-month surveys) was also complete as of December 31, 2023. Survey response rates were more than 50%; however, sample sizes for this one cohort are very small.

**Table 4 | Data Sources and Sample Sizes — Newcomer Cohort**

Data Sources and Sample Sizes (As of Dec. 31, 2023)	Newcomer Cohort (Apr.–June 2022)		
	Online	Virtual	TOTAL
Program Enrolment — Admin Data	13	10	23
Consent to Research/Baseline Survey	8/13 (62%)	6/10 (60%)	14/23 (61%)
Consent to Data Linkage	8/13 (62%)	6/10 (60%)	14/23 (61%)
Exit Survey	5/8 (63%)	3/6 (50%)	8/14 (57%)
Three-month Follow-up Survey	5/8 (63%)	4/6 (67%)	9/14 (64%)
Nine-month Follow-up Survey	2/8 (25%)	4/6 (67%)	6/14 (43%)



## 4. Summary

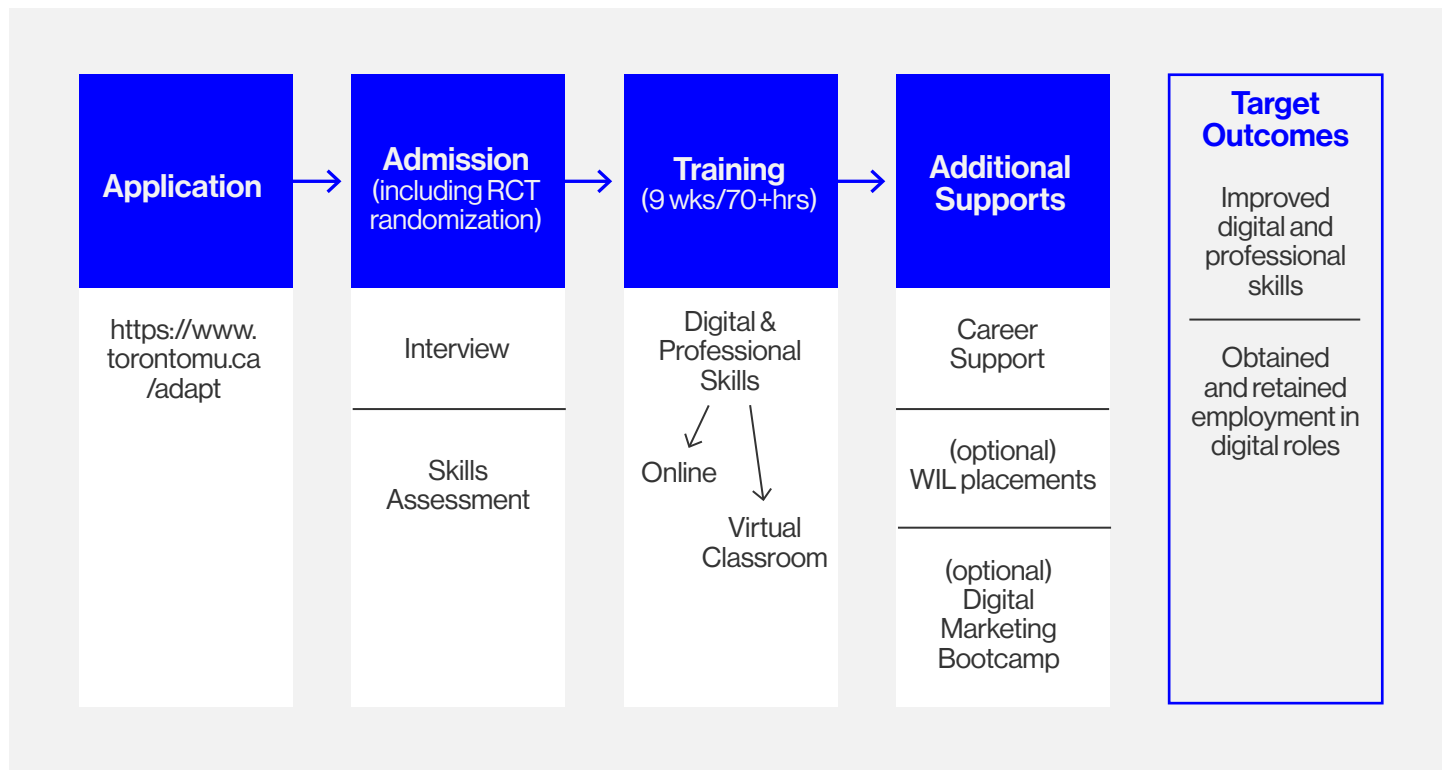
This report provides an interim update on the ADaPT project in the current FSC scaling phase. To summarize, the RCT cohorts met overall program and research enrolment targets but fell short of survey completion targets. These targets are expected to be met with additional cohorts run in 2024 and will hopefully be bolstered through the proposed default opt-in consent approach (pending REB approval). Three non-RCT cohorts were delivered as planned.

We will complete data collection with all originally planned cohorts and continue to collect data as additional cohorts are delivered in 2024. In the final report, we will present findings in all five learning areas, including program outcomes, impact and data linkage.



# Appendix A

## Participant Journey



## Appendix B

### Program Stream Characteristics

ADaPT Streams	Virtual Classroom (synchronous)	Online (asynchronous)
Length of training	Nine weeks	
Learning mode	Instructor-led synchronous live Zoom workshops offered two times per week (each 1.5 to 4 hours), with assignments before and after each workshop.	Self-directed asynchronous browser-based modules two times per week, featuring video lessons curated from LinkedIn Learning and practice exercises, which participants have access to for six months from the program start
Peer interaction	Included in live Zoom workshops	Optional weekly facilitated Zoom meetings to check in with peers and solidify learning
Interview and career coaching	Optional 1.5-hour career support session and 1:1 coaching with a Career Counsellor, focusing on resume writing, interview practice, labour market research and job search strategies. Optional group mock interviews	
Certificate of completion	Those who completed at least 80% of the program modules	
Wraparound Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Optional six-week Digital Marketing bootcamp via Jelly Academy (at a cost)</li> <li>• Optional three-month paid WIL placements (not guaranteed)</li> <li>• Notifications about available opportunities</li> <li>• Access to a job posting board maintained by the ADaPT team</li> </ul>	

## Appendix C

### Common Outcomes Framework

Our measurement approach includes indicators that are specific to an intervention as well as a set of common indicators that are measured for every intervention in the Portfolio.

These common indicators are drawn from Blueprint’s Common Outcomes Framework, which was developed in consultation with our partners and was informed by review of employment-related outcomes frameworks and measurement approaches both within Canada and internationally.

They include:

- **Intermediate outcomes** that reflect ‘in-program’ participant experiences and gains (e.g., program satisfaction and skills development).
- **Long-term outcomes** such as employment and educational attainment.

Using a consistent approach to measuring outcomes is part of our commitment to understanding how each intervention in the Portfolio is reaching people across Canada and allows us to measure long-term outcomes using Statistics Canada’s Social Data Linking Environment.

	Outcome	Indicators
Socio-demographics	Sex & Gender	Sex at birth
		Self-identified gender
	Age	Age
	Location	Province
		Region & Municipality
	Marital status	Marital status
	Children & Dependents	Children
		Dependents
		Household size
	Household Income	Household income
	Education	Highest credential obtained
		Location of highest credential attainment
	Indigenous Identity	Self-identified Indigenous identity
	Francophone status & languages spoken	First language spoken
		Official languages
Language spoken at home		
Other languages spoken (At home)		
Citizenship Status	Place of birth	
	Year of arrival	
	Citizenship status	
Racial identity	Self-identification as member of racialized group	
Disability	Self-identified disability	

	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
<b>Employment status and history</b>	Employment	Employment status
		Nature of employment (permanent, temporary, full/part-time)
	Earnings	Hours worked / week
		Wages
		Annual earnings
	Industry and occupation of employment	NAICS code of job
		NOC code of job
	Work history	Time since last employed
		NOC code of job
		NAICS code of job
Income source	Income sources	
<b>Intermediate outcomes</b>	Program completion	Successful completion of planned activities
	Participant satisfaction	Satisfaction with program
		Perceived Utility of Program
		Likelihood to recommend
<b>Customized intermediate outcomes</b>	Skills gains	Measured gains in specific skills
	Program-specific credential attainment	Attainment of program-specific credentials



**Blueprint**