

Learning Brief for the Careers in Energy Project: “Skills Match – The Energy Fit”

SRDC’s Learning
Support for Future
Skills Projects



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
OBJECTIVES	2
DEFINING PHASE	2
Summary of the defining phase	2
DESIGNING PHASE	4
Summary of the designing phase	4
TESTING PHASE	7
Summary of testing phase	7
SUMMARY OF PROJECT LEARNING	10
Implications for those working in this area in the future	12
APPENDIX A: LEARNING SUPPORT PLAN	13

INTRODUCTION

Through a number of thematic calls for proposals, the Future Skills Centre (FSC) has supported the development, refinement, or expansion of approaches to develop skills for workers from a variety of backgrounds and in a variety of sectors and regions. These projects identify emerging and in-demand skills, and test new methods of training delivery. The insights that come from these projects will help inform governments, the private sector, labour, educational training institutions, non-profits, and academics on the broader adoption of novel approaches to training and skills development. Furthermore, the projects are required to mobilize knowledge and evidence among key stakeholders, institutions, and decision-makers for the purposes of improving policies and practices in Canada. FSC has engaged SRDC to support this process by developing and then implementing a customized learning support plan for each of several projects, based on past activities and current status.

This document presents the learning brief for Skills Match – The Energy Fit, a project delivered Careers in Energy (formerly PetroLMI), a division of Energy Safety Canada, running from March 2020 to May 2022. Careers in Energy supports the goal of advancing a sustainable, skilled and productive workforce in the energy industry. Energy Safety Canada is a national non-profit safety authority with the mandate to support Canada’s energy industry workforce. Careers in Energy developed and implemented the project – one of many funded by the Future Skills Centre as part of a larger strategy to address the need for shock-proofing the future of work, with a particular focus on vulnerable populations in the Canadian workforce.

SRDC began its research on the project by reviewing all the available documentation related to the project, including the proposal, quarterly and annual reports, project information sheet prepared by FSC, work plan, learning reflection and final report. Using a standardized template, SRDC worked collaboratively with both FSC and Careers in Energy to develop learning questions related to each of the three learning stages of the project: defining, designing, and testing in a ‘learning support plan’ (See Appendix A). We then worked through a process to answer each of the questions. Beyond analysis of these documents, SRDC completed an interview with the Careers in Energy lead in October 2023. Finally, SRDC shared and discussed with Careers in Energy the findings to ensure their accuracy and appropriateness.

This learning brief presents a synthesis of the answers to the questions posed in the learning support plan. For each of the three stages the project engaged in, this document presents what the project has achieved, lessons learned, and recommendations with respect to future evidence generation that the FSC can utilize, filter, and distill for its ongoing dissemination projects.

OBJECTIVES

Skills Match aims to develop tools to help address a skills mismatch in Canada’s energy sector. More specifically, the project aimed to connect underemployed and under-represented job-seekers to new opportunities by:

- Shifting assumptions about opportunities available in the energy ecosystem across Western Canada;
- Providing content and resources so job-seekers could understand their skills, aptitudes and experience, as well as their potential to transition;
- Demonstrating the nature of work and aptitudes required in targeted, transferable sectors;
- Profiling the occupations for transferable careers and connecting job-seekers with the next steps in their transition.

DEFINING PHASE

SUMMARY OF THE DEFINING PHASE

Defining the main intervention and how to reach the target populations is crucial for the successful design and implementation of any project. It is also important to identify critical barriers and enablers to support the expected change. In this project, the main intervention was developing engaging, innovative, and interactive tools to help address a skills mismatch in Canada’s energy sector.

As the core outcomes of this phase, Careers in Energy defined and developed both a website (Careers in Energy) and a VR experience to support this main objective.

The focus of both the VR program and website resources were underemployed and unemployed job seekers, with a particular focus on Indigenous Peoples, women, youth, newcomers, and mid-career energy workers in a job transition.

Careers in Energy Website

The Careers in Energy [website](#) featured comprehensive research, interactive resources and tools, and a blueprint for transition between traditional oil and gas jobs to more than 170 energy

related occupations. The website used video, animated graphics, and accessible content to engage participants.

In the content creation phase of the project, Creative Links was consulted to assist in the research and development of website information. This included the transferability of various oil and gas occupations into over 170 occupations among six energy related sectors (cleantech, energy related industrial construction, high tech in oil and gas, liquefied natural gas, petrochemicals, and renewables).

The Careers in Energy website explains what workers can expect from each sector as they prepare for a career change. It provides overviews of the skills and experience needed to be successful in each sector, the nature of each work environment, and the benefits of working in each sector. The website also includes stories of real-life transitions to help workers better envision their career paths.

VR Experience – Adapting Futures

The Virtual Reality (VR) Experience (*Adapting Futures*) was intended to be an engaging and informative tool for job seekers to evaluate their energy sector options. Careers in Energy consulted with MAMMOTH XR to develop animated tours of five work environments in VR with the following objectives:

- Engage workers in exploring career transitions
- Immerse workers in the nature of the work, including the working environment
- Explain operations, processes, technology, and occupations
- Offer aptitude assessment activities

MAMMOTH XR also created a video trailer to promote the VR Series.

What worked, what didn't, and why?

Careers in Energy experienced some difficulties reaching their intended audiences [underemployed and unemployed job seekers, with a particular focus on Indigenous Peoples, women, newcomers, and mid-career energy workers in a job transition] due to the impact of COVID-19. The original outreach strategy included attending large format career development events, along with print and digital advertising, and distribution of tools and resources through identified project partners. To reach target audiences, these intended partners included regional

and provincial career service agencies, post-secondary institutions, immigrant service agencies, and local community groups providing career services to underrepresented groups.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions on large group events in 2021 and 2022, Careers in Energy adjusted its delivery plan to focus on small group or individual in-person outreach activities. This involved focusing on relationship building with local and regional organizations, especially in rural and remote communities, so that they could implement the programs themselves when provided with the appropriate resources. Careers in Energy partnered with career development advisors in targeted regions, who then disseminated project tools and resources on Careers in Energy's behalf. Careers in Energy supplied the VR headsets along with supporting resources.

Careers in Energy also completed outreach activities when COVID-19 restrictions eased from the end of March to May 2022. This included delivering presentations to high schools, post-secondary institutions, community groups, and career development agencies across Alberta, British Columbia, and Saskatchewan.

DESIGNING PHASE

SUMMARY OF THE DESIGNING PHASE

Careers in Energy supported skills development in Canada's energy sector through two main deliverables: a website with career planning tools and resources, and a VR experience. This section provides an overview of the details of both programs, including demographic information on participants where available. Response to the programs will be discussed in the testing phase section of this report.

Careers in Energy Website

Careers in Energy collaborated with Creative Links to research and build detailed occupational profiles for six growing or emerging energy sectors. Through this research, information was gathered regarding:

- Sector specific skills of transferability between oil and gas sector
- Skills and qualifications required
- Salary and benefits
- Work environment

- Nature of work and key activities
- Value proposition to job seekers

The transferability assessment included a rating of ‘direct’, ‘refocus’, or ‘reboot’ corresponding to the level of work involved to make the change to each occupation in applicable sectors. It also included an assessment of the level of upskilling required as well as details of what additional skills or experience workers needed to update or gain. This was largely based on data obtained by Creative Links. Using this data, users were able to select their role, or roles they were interested in learning about, from the website’s 170 career profiles to explore options and transferability.

After website content was developed, Careers in Energy then partnered with Strut Creative to adapt this research into consumable website content, including text, visual, animated graphics and video. Website content was organized into three sections: “About Energy”, “Working in Energy”, and career profiles. The career profiles included the transferability assessment tool. The website also included five animated videos to explain working in different sectors, providing information about operations, processes, and technologies. Strut Creative also developed a media plan and marketing campaign for product launch and promotion/awareness.

Careers in Energy also facilitated webinars to introduce job seekers and career transitioners to the website. These webinars were conducted in Alberta and Saskatchewan, with an additional webinar in BC cancelled due to a lack of attendees. Careers in Energy partnered with career and employment agencies in Alberta and Saskatchewan to promote the webinar to their client base and network.

VR Experience – Adapting Futures

The VR program was designed and implemented in collaboration with MAMMOTH XR, with five VR experiences ultimately being offered to participants. The project team drafted a script and storyboard for each VR tour while MAMMOTH XR began developing the experience.

The team developed one VR experience first (for the petrochemical sector), which then underwent multiple rounds of user testing during a pilot tour. Subject matter experts also provided feedback to ensure authenticity and accuracy. Feedback was used to improve the VR pilot experience as well as develop the other four.

Careers in Energy was able to network to establish subject matter experts for all five VR experiences. This involved partnerships with Terrapin Geothermics, TC Energy, Highwood Emissions, the Trans Mountain Corporation, WhiteCap, ECO Canada, and the Canadian

Renewable Energy Association (CanREA). Other partnerships included subject matter expertise in VR (Momentum) and project outreach/dissemination (The GoldMind Project).

Careers in Energy mainly targeted career fairs and trade shows to offer the VR experiences to participants. In order to target specific demographics with their VR experiences, Careers in Energy established targeted partnerships to both offer workshops and events as well as promote tools and resources. These included organizations supporting Indigenous peoples, job seekers, newcomers, people with disabilities, students, and industry organizations.

MAMMOTH XR designed and animated each sector facility tour, and each VR experience took about 15 minutes for the user to complete. The project team also drafted and began developing mini games for the VR tours.

MAMMOTH XR also collaborated with Strut Creative to develop a user generated email with metadata connecting the VR experience to the Careers in Energy website, allowing demographic and user information to be collected for reporting.

What worked, what didn't, and why?

Careers in Energy identified some lessons learned for website development. Originally, Careers in Energy intended to complete a job scraping exercise to identify the employment outlook for sectors in Western Canada and any indicators of future activity and employment to monitor, as well as commonly used and consistent job titles and evaluated labour data platforms. However, this job scraping exercise did not return the results the team was looking for, as there was too little hiring activity among the emerging energy sectors to register using the currently available labour market analysis tools. There were not enough job postings to offer a sufficient amount of data to work with.

As a result, Careers in Energy determined that the most effective way to gather sector specific information was through interviews with energy industry companies, conducted by Creative Links. This alternative method was able to collect the information required. Careers in Energy noted that a strong, knowledgeable team was critical to success, in order to work well together and have varied areas of expertise. Access to technical subject matter experts was also important to ensure accurate content.

Careers in Energy also noted some lessons learned during the VR experiences. As each VR experience took about 15 minutes to complete, a full tour of each of the five difference sectors was lengthy for participants. Depending on the event, participants may have only had time to explore one energy sector. Further, some participants were not comfortable wearing the headset for all five experiences. e.g., due to experiencing nausea.

Going forward, Careers in Energy is contemplating revising the VR events by providing information about each sector in advance to participants, who can then prioritize specific VR tours with their time. Careers in Energy is also considering reducing the time required for each additional energy sector tour.

TESTING PHASE

SUMMARY OF TESTING PHASE

The questions related to the testing phase focused initially on the extent to which this project helped Careers in Energy achieve its goals of supporting skills matching in the energy industry, as well as on the specifics of testing and understanding program success.

Careers in Energy Website

Following launch, Careers in Energy's Careers in Energy website received positive feedback, with strong reviews from career development professionals, teachers, and job seekers. Feedback indicated the website was effectively designed, contained the right amount and type of content, and included useful resources to help job seekers navigate career information. Careers in Energy also received anecdotal feedback that members of the career development community (i.e., career advisors) are using the website with clients independently.

The website's marketing campaign performed well, with a click-through rate and cost-per-click rate that exceeded industry averages. Careers in Energy noted that the website traffic reflected its target demographic, with a notable increase in female visitors. Careers in Energy used a combination of social media and paid ads to advertise online, and was also able to advertise in person at career and trade events.

Careers in Energy found that the website greatly surpassed their initial goal of 10,000 users annually, having reached almost 60,000 users between October 2021 and May 2022. Roughly 43 per cent of website participants are female, with a relatively even age distribution (the highest representation being in the 18-24 year old category). Most website visitors are concentrated in Alberta.

Careers in Energy also conducted webinars to introduce participants to website content. There were 19 participants in the live webinars, with 49 participants in total receiving webinar content (the rest viewing the recording). Among webinar participants, 16 responded to a survey. This survey showed that overall, the Careers in Energy website motivated job seekers and the career

counselors that support them to do more research into energy sector careers, using the website as a resource.

VR Experience – Adapting Futures

Careers in Energy found that VR was successful in engaging users. In particular, they found that the visuals and story telling approach of VR appeared to resonate well with audiences facing potential language barriers (e.g., immigrants and newcomers) and who had limited information about energy.

VR was seen as a unique approach to offering career information, working well as an immersive and engaging storytelling tool with the potential for further application as a training and skill development tool.

Though the Careers in Energy website was more appealing to older workers than the VR experience, the VR content resonated with this demographic more than expected. Conversely, though students were attracted to the VR technology, it was not as effective as originally anticipated. Students were not as immediately influenced by career content on VR as to make an immediate career decision as other demographics. This was thought to potentially be due to ongoing exposure to technology.

Table 1 offers a summary of VR outreach activities and participants, as well as the target audience for each event.

Table 1 Summary of VR Outreach Activities and Participants

Area	Name of Event	Participants	Audience
National reach	Cannexus22	65	Career advisors
SK	Regina Work Prep Centre: Community of Practice	40	Career advisors
AB	10 Peaks Innovation Xchange Conference	58	Youth/educators/career advisors
AB	Indigenous Winter Job Fair	65	Indigenous Peoples
AB	Inside Education: Energy Innovations	65	Teachers/career advisors
BC	WorkBC/Employment Connections workshop	6	Career advisors
AB	Energy Futures Roadshow	12	Industry

Area	Name of Event	Participants	Audience
BC	North Peace Senior Secondary School: Women in Trades	25	Women
AB	Strathmore High School	72	Youth
SK	Polytechnic Career Fairs	350	Youth/job-seekers
SK	Regina Work Prep Centre Workshop	13	Career advisors
AB	Momentum workshop	18	Youth/job-seekers
SK	Contact Conference22	11	Career counsellors/practitioners, educators
AB	Talent Pool Job Fair (2 dates)	265	Job-seekers/primarily newcomers
AB	James Fowler High School	160	Youth
AB	Regional Generate	126	Youth
AB	Direction for Immigrants	18	Newcomers
BC	Centre of Excellence in Oil & Gas/Northern Lights College	26	Job-seekers
BC	Fort St John Job Fair	65	Job-seekers
AB	Petroleum Safety Conference	60	Industry
SK	South East Cornerstone School Division	473	Youth
AB	Calgary Immigrant Women’s Association	15	Women/newcomers
AB	Energy Futures Lab: Youth Innovation Jam	4	Youth
BC	Canada Gas & LNG Conference	48	Industry
BC	Gitxaala Nation/Charles Hays Secondary School/Continuous Learning Centre	197	Youth/Indigenous Peoples
SK	Regina District Industry Education Council Try a Career Days	720	Youth
AB	Calgary Career Hub	14	Job-seekers
BC	Fort Chipewyan: Career Exploration Day	13	Indigenous Peoples
Total VR Users		3582	

Source: Energy Safety Canada Outreach Report, June 28 2022

What worked, what didn't, and why?

Energy Safety Canada consulted with a project advisory committee and undertook a focus group to obtain feedback on both the VR experience and the website (architecture, design and user interface). They suggested that VR might not resonate with mature, experienced workers (40+) and would be better received by young adults and students. However, Careers in Energy found that although older workers preferred website content, they resonated more with the VR experience than was expected. Youth were also not as fully engaged by VR as was first expected, potentially due to ongoing exposure. Immigrants and newcomers were found to be the most highly engaged by the VR experience.

Careers in Energy found that participating in events such as career fairs and trade shows often did not allow for the opportunity to gather data related to user feedback, i.e., on the VR experiences. This was largely due to time constraints. Initially, Careers in Energy planned to give participants a short survey after using the VR headsets, but found that this was difficult in practice as visitors were anxious to move on to other exhibitors quickly. Careers in Energy found greater success using smaller groups and workshops for getting participants to complete surveys and provide feedback.

Careers in Energy also found that virtual events (e.g., virtual career fairs) did not prove as effective in terms of outreach as other approaches, due to difficulty engaging with attendees as well as in capturing information.

SUMMARY OF PROJECT LEARNING

Meeting original objectives

This FSC-funded shock-proofing project was intended to be relevant to employees and employers in the energy sector.

As set out above, the key objective for the project was to **develop engaging, innovative, and interactive tools to help address a skills mismatch in Canada's energy sector.**

The project **met its key objective** through its programming initiatives: both the Careers in Energy website and VR experiences.

We consider each original individual objective in turn:

- To **shift assumptions** available in the energy ecosystem across Western Canada.

Careers in Energy was **successful** in this objective. Feedback on both website interaction and VR experiences were all largely positive, with newcomer participants especially likely to suggest that they were considering a career in the energy sector. Further, using this variety of mediums focused on visuals and interaction is able to appeal to a variety of audiences. Visual communication in particular was found to be effective in communicating through potential language barriers.

- To **provide content and resources** so job-seekers understand their skills, aptitudes, and experience, as well as their potential to transition

Careers in Energy was **successful** in this objective. The Careers in Energy website and VR experience were able to successfully communicate this information. Categorizing potential to transition into ‘direct’, ‘refocus’ and ‘reboot’ provided the steps required to transition into different career paths. In addition to the self-assessment and transferability tool offered on the website, the VR experience also includes an aptitude assessment. Both VR and website user feedback were positive.

- To **demonstrate the nature of work** and aptitudes required in targeted, transferable sectors

Careers in Energy was **successful** in this objective. Again, the transferability tool on the website was key in assessing and communicating potential career paths and skills required to transition.

- To **profile the occupations for transferable careers** and connecting job-seekers with the next steps in their transition.

Careers in Energy was **successful** in this objective. The inventory of over 170 occupations on the Careers in Energy website provided information on a variety of career paths.

Practices that seemed effective

Firstly, Careers in Energy found that the VR experience resonated strongly with newcomer participants in particular. This was thought to be largely due to the immersive and visual nature of the experience, which was able to communicate more information than text alone and circumvented potential language barriers.

Secondly, Careers in Energy was able to utilize partnerships to adapt to event and travel restrictions brought on by COVID-19. By shipping headsets to locations and providing the necessary tools, resources, and training, career organizations were able to offer Careers in Energy services on their behalf. This was especially helpful in many remote locations.

Practices to revise

Firstly, Careers in Energy found that their job scraping exercise was not as effective as was hoped due to a lack of available data. They were able to collect the necessary information through interviews with subject matter experts instead. Careers in Energy suggested that job scraping may be possible in the future when there are more data and/or better analysis tools.

Secondly, Careers in Energy found that collecting feedback from VR participants at events was difficult as most people were in a hurry to move on to the next exhibit before taking a survey. They suggested that smaller events with designated time allotted for collecting feedback would be more effective in this area.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THOSE WORKING IN THIS AREA IN THE FUTURE

- VR has the potential to communicate information while avoiding potential language barriers in an engaging way
- Partnerships would be key in establishing similar programs, particularly collaborations with subject matter experts
- Additional funding would be needed to meet ongoing interest and to expand the program, including developing additional and up-to-date energy sector information

APPENDIX A: LEARNING SUPPORT PLAN

The Learning Support Plan structured questions according to the learning stages the project included. There could be up to five learning stages:

- **Discovery** with a focus on understanding the issues and/or needs (FSC Innovation Stage: Needs Assessment)

This includes approaches intended to gain real insights into the lived experiences of the target population and to build an understanding of the opportunity space prior to designing skills interventions.

- **Defining** with a focus on project rationale and/or how to address the issue (FSC Innovation Stage: Concept Generation)

This includes approaches intended to frame the opportunity(ies) identified (e.g., as a result of a prior discovery) for changing future outcomes, define target population and/or outcomes, and determine the most critical barriers and enablers to supporting change.

- **Designing** with a focus on program logic/design or "bringing the concept to life" (FSC Innovation Stage: Research/design/prototype)

This includes approaches intended to develop solutions: setting out how to prototype potential solutions and validate these with those in the target population.

- **Testing** with a focus on initial delivery (FSC Innovation Stage: Delivery and Iteration)

This includes approaches intended to be used to test solutions or otherwise support collective ability across the ecosystem to learn what works, adapt and refine.

- **Scaling** with a focus on scale and spread (FSC Innovation Stages: Scaling and Sustainable Scaling)

This includes approaches intended to increase the support for and/or adoption of known solutions or that would assist in identifying and persuading public and/or private funders and/or partners to dedicate their resources to increase the reach and/or impact of known interventions.

SRDC concluded that the Skills Match project included three learning stages: defining, designing, and testing.

Possible information sources							
Learning Stage	Learning and Gapfilling Questions	Is more information required?	Documentation	Project Lead	Participants	Project Partners	Other Stakeholders
Defining	What best practices were used that aided in successfully recruiting and engaging subject matter experts early on throughout the project? How were subject matter experts identified and what roles were they given? Was it "early on" or "throughout" the project?	Yes	One Pager	Interview			
Additional/Gapfilling Questions							
Defining	How does the project define 'experienced job seeker'?	Yes	ESC Package	Interview			

Learning Stage	Learning and Gapfilling Questions	Is more information required?	Documentation	Possible information sources			
				Project Lead	Participants	Project Partners	Other Stakeholders
Defining	The original proposal seems to emphasize the VR component of the project with the website seemingly more secondary. Is this an accurate interpretation? Did the emphasis on project outputs change from what was in the proposal?	Yes	ESC Package (pages 28-35)	Interview			
Defining	The proposal mentions XR (extended reality) experiences, while later reports refer to it as VR (virtual reality). Are these terms interchangeable?	Yes		Interview			
Design	How did the project go about designing recruitment? Was recruitment targeted to marginalized groups?	Yes	Annual Activity Report 2021-2022	Interview			

Possible information sources							
Learning Stage	Learning and Gapfilling Questions	Is more information required?	Documentation	Project Lead	Participants	Project Partners	Other Stakeholders
Design	Can you tell us more about how user aptitude was tested, i.e., the transferability assessment tool on the website? How does it work?	Yes	ESC Package; Annual Activity Report 2021-2022	Interview			
Design	Were any changes made to project design during implementation? How effective were they and why?	Yes		Interview			
Additional/Gapfilling Questions							
Design	Regarding the website's transferability assessment tool, how were skills identified as transferable? Was this validated by industry experts?	Yes	Q4 2020-2021	Interview			
Design	Can you provide more detail on the 'job scraping exercise'? As we understand interview-based data was used instead, how did this impact the results? Did interviews	Yes	Annual Activity Report 2021-2022; Q2 2021	Interview			

Possible information sources							
Learning Stage	Learning and Gapfilling Questions	Is more information required?	Documentation	Project Lead	Participants	Project Partners	Other Stakeholders
	yield the type of information you would have hoped to get with the job scraping exercise?						
Testing	Was website feedback collected from users at any point?	Yes	Annual Activity Report 2021-2022	Interview			
Testing	What was the survey uptake at events? Were surveys only conducted for the VR program, or was any feedback collected for other initiatives? (i.e., webinars, workshops, newsletter) What did the surveys reveal about the effectiveness of the VR tool?	Yes	Annual Activity Report 2021-2022	Interview			
Testing	What were the challenges mobilizing employers and coordinating multi-stakeholder initiatives? What barriers	Yes		Interview			

Possible information sources							
Learning Stage	Learning and Gapfilling Questions	Is more information required?	Documentation	Project Lead	Participants	Project Partners	Other Stakeholders
	prevented these sectors from collaborating before?						
Testing	Can you provide more details regarding the focus groups that were held to gather feedback on the VR and website design? Who participated in the focus groups?		Q1 2021				
Testing	Can you provide some insight into the effectiveness and accessibility of both the VR initiative and the website? Were both these initiatives successful in achieving project goals?		Q2 2021				
Additional/Gapfilling Questions							
Testing	You report VR did not resonate with some demographic groups, what would be your recommended next steps for engaging these groups?	Yes	One Pager				

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