

Project Insights Report

Training our career development professionals



PARTNERS

ASPECT – Association of Service Providers for Employability and Career Training
ETHOS Career Management Ltd.



LOCATIONS

British Columbia



INVESTMENT

\$145,000



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☰ Executive Summary

The pandemic forced Canada’s career development sector to move many services online. The sudden shift left many career development professionals unprepared. This project sought to understand the challenges faced by practitioners as a result of the increasing role of technology in this industry and to shed light on the skills and supports these professionals and their clients need in future.

The B.C.-based Association of Service Providers for Employability and Training is testing the skills most needed by career development practitioners to improve their capacity and effectiveness in delivering career services virtually, especially to vulnerable populations.

The research shows that there are benefits to delivering career services virtually, including more capacity to serve clients efficiently.

However, skills training for career development professionals is required to support remote delivery of services and relationship building in a virtual world where not all clients have the same receptiveness, ability and tools to benefit from receiving help in this way.

The findings may provide insight into how other industries which switched abruptly to an online service delivery model may need to do to address training for employees struggling to keep up in a virtual world.

KEY INSIGHTS

- 1** Delivering career services virtually increases the career development industry’s capacity to serve clients, especially persons living with a disability or situated in rural and remote areas.
- 2** It is more difficult to engage with reluctant clients virtually, and to address anxiety or other mental health issues they may face.

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Career development professionals need standardized upskilling to deliver services virtually that is quick, inexpensive, easy to use and connected to a credential.

▶ **The Issue**

The dramatic expansion of online service delivery in the career development industry requires interventions to ensure career development practitioners can adapt so that workers can navigate the shifting labour market. This begins with asking employees in the industry about their experience in the transition to a virtual world, understanding what kind of training would benefit them most, and what barriers exist that may prevent them from gaining the skills they need.

The research showed that:

- 49 per cent of career professionals surveyed had not completed any specific career-development training to address virtual delivery, suggesting the need to close a significant gap
- Career development professionals said cost and heavy workload were barriers preventing them from seeking upskilling, suggesting the need for fast, affordable training
- Virtual service delivery expands access for job seekers to resources and professionals from around the province, country or globe, allowing the industry to cope with uneven demand across jurisdictions.



What We Investigated

This project seeks to understand the competencies related to virtual learning and facilitation for career development practitioners that should become standard knowledge and practice in an industry so crucial in labour markets that are always in flux.

- What skills are most needed by career development practitioners in British Columbia to improve their capacity and effectiveness in delivering career service virtually, especially to vulnerable populations?
- What skills related to virtual learning and facilitation should become standard knowledge and practice in the industry?

- What barriers exist for career development practitioners seeking skills upgrading?
- How best can supports be provided to these employees so that they can better provide services online?
- What can be learned by the project that can be applied across the industry?

✔ What We're Learning

The research revealed that there are a number of benefits to virtually delivered career services, including increased capacity to serve clients, especially those who could not easily attend in-person sessions. This could include persons living with a disability, those with care constraints or those living in rural and remote areas. The move to online delivery also enabled career development practitioners to provide clients with efficient access to other resources and to career professionals from around the province, country, or globe, regardless of where they live.

At the same time, career development practitioners report challenges to support clients virtually. They find it more difficult to engage with reluctant clients and to build constructive, positive relationships with them. This can present barriers to addressing client health issues including anxiety and other mental health concerns.

Career development professionals report that the clients most disadvantaged by virtually delivery are underrepresented groups for whom digital literacy, access to Internet or health-related issues are of particular relevance. Clients who could potentially benefit most from virtual service delivery such as those living in remote areas were often most disadvantaged by barriers to technology including lack of access to the Internet or a computer.

The safety, security and privacy of clients accessing virtual career services cannot be guaranteed. For example, women fleeing violence may find accessing services online problematic.

The research revealed that efforts are needed to upskill career development practitioners in four key areas – competence, including virtual communications and relationship-building, digital literacy; mental health and wellness; and building capacity in service delivery.

The project also underscored challenges in retraining for the virtual environment faced by career development practitioners. When designing training, consideration must be given to addressing the considerable financial and time constraints faced by these employees, ensuring alignment with the Pan-Canadian Competency Framework for Career Development Professionals, ensuring ease of use, and modules that connect to a microcredential or other learning assessment or recognition.

Virtual delivery is inadequate in addressing barriers faced by vulnerable populations and should not replace in-person supports.

So that the career development industry can support workers in navigating a shifting labour market, the skills eco-system needs to provide standardized upskilling for career practitioners that is accessible and affordable.

★ Why It Matters

The pandemic forced many industries to move online, and the trend seems here to stay. For career development practitioners and many others the shift was immediate and forced employees to take on new roles without the necessary training. It's important for the skills ecosystem to help all workers keep up with new ways of doing things brought on by technology.

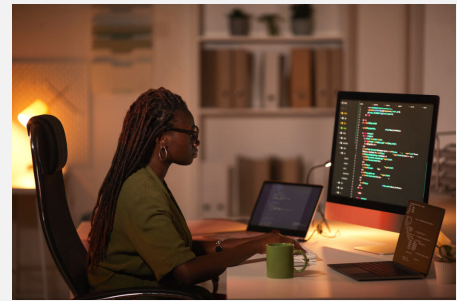
Career development professionals play a vital role in helping workers from across the labour market adapt and find their way in an economy that is always churning. This service is important for individual workers, employers, industries and also for the overall health of the economy.

It is essential to ensure practitioners in this key career support industry have the tools and skills they need to adapt to changing technology as well as other labour market innovations and trends. If career development professionals are not sufficiently prepared, they cannot help other workers trying to stay abreast of modern labour market requirements.

The career development industry views the labour market from both the supply and demand perspective. While career development professionals help workers navigate a shifting labour market, they too need skills training to help their clients on their employment journeys, especially in a virtual world.

The Association of Service Providers for Employability and Training project has yielded valuable insights into what's needed in Canada's career development sector both by workers and the professionals who work within it.

- Virtual services should be viewed as an additional delivery method of career development services, not a replacement of in-person services.
- Investment is needed in technology, digital skills and high-speed Internet to support virtual career services in rural, remote, northern, low-income and Indigenous communities.
- Overall investment in career development services, including training of the professionals who deliver them, is needed to ensure the infrastructure needed to support changing labour market needs.



State of Skills: Digital Tools in the Skills Ecosystem

There is considerable promise in the role digital tools and virtual career services can play in improving access to training and career development, particularly for those with geographic barriers or constraints such as family care or other work responsibilities

[Read Thematic Report](#)

Have questions about our work? Do you need access to a report in English or French? Please contact communications@fsc-ccf.ca.

How to Cite This Report

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